

NYSTCE 103 · 104

School District Leader **Study Packet**

The complete study guide in print — the blueprint and all sixteen objectives, the answer patterns, law and district operations, the written-assignment playbook, **99 practice items** with scenarios and exhibits, and **225 recall cards**.

NY School Leadership Prep · v4.0 · August 2026

Free to use, print and share. Independent and unaffiliated with NYSED, the NYSTCE program, Pearson or Evaluation Systems. Answers and rationales are in the companion **SDL Answer Key**.

FRONT MATTER

How to use this packet

What is in here, how the practice items and recall cards are numbered, and what you can and cannot trust.

READ THIS BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE

The School District Leader assessment is **two tests**, 103 and 104, each of them **60 selected-response items plus 2 written assignments**. The selected-response section and the written section are worth **exactly the same** — 50% each. Passing score is **220** and each part is scored separately. Most candidates over-prepare the multiple choice and under-prepare the writing. Part V of this packet exists to stop that.

IF YOU ARE ALSO SITTING THE SCHOOL BUILDING LEADER EXAM

The **SDL testing windows are not the SBL windows**. They are shorter and open later. The score report dates are identical, which is exactly what makes the mistake easy. The written-assignment criteria differ too: SDL is scored on **Purpose · Application of Content · Support**, not on SBL's Completeness / Accuracy / Depth of Support. Verified windows are in Part I.

What is in here

Nine parts, in the order they are worth reading. Parts I–V are the study material, Part VI is the item bank, Part VII is recall practice, Part VIII is the test-day plan and Part IX is where every source came from.

Working the practice items

Part VI prints **questions only**, with lettered answer bubbles. Fill the bubble, then check yourself against the companion **SDL Answer Key**, which carries the correct letter and the full rationale for every item. Items are numbered **1–99** and the numbering is identical in both documents, so the two line up page for page.

Several items share a scenario. Scenario boxes print once, immediately before the first item that uses them — read the scenario, then work every item under it before moving on. That is how they appear on the real test.

Do not skip the rationale on items you got right. Roughly a fifth of these items are genuine NYSTCE sample items carrying NYSED's own published rationale, and those rationales name the exact objective being tested. That mapping — item back to objective language — is what makes the next unfamiliar item answerable.

Working the recall cards

Part VII prints **225 cards** in nine decks, questions and hints only. Each card carries a two-letter deck code and an index, e.g. **FN-14**; the answers are under the same codes in the Answer Key. Say the whole answer out loud before you check. Saying it aloud matters: on this exam you have to *produce* this material under time pressure, not recognise it.

Deck codes

Code	Deck	Cards	Code	Deck	Cards
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			

What you can trust here

Official means NYSED or Pearson published it: the blueprint, all sixteen objectives, the written-assignment directions, the scoring criteria and four-point scale, the sample selected-response items with their published rationales, and the four sample assignments with their official strong responses and evaluations. It is reproduced here for study and labelled wherever it appears.

Everything else — the answer patterns, the practice items not marked official, every recall card, the response skeletons, the model responses, and all of the law-and-operations commentary — is **practitioner-written**. It was verified against NYSED, NYSTCE, NY Senate and Office of the State Comptroller sources in **August 2026**, and anything that could not be verified is marked as unverified rather than asserted. It is not NYSED-endorsed.

The SDL assessment framework is © **2008** and has never been revised. It cites no external standards set — not PSEL, not ISLLC. Study the framework objectives as the blueprint. Windows, fees and policies change; confirm anything decision-critical at nystce.nesinc.com and on NYSED's certification site before you act on it.

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PART I

Before You Register

The School District Leader assessment in plain terms — how 103 and 104 are built, the testing windows (which are **not** the School Building Leader windows), what it costs, how the writing is scored, the score waiver most candidates have never heard of, and where the SDL certificate sits after the 2025 Regents changes. Verified against NYSED and NYSTCE sources in August 2026.

THE SINGLE MOST SURPRISING FACT

The **SDL testing windows are not the SBL testing windows**. Both exams are offered by appointment inside short windows rather than year-round, and the two calendars publish the same *score report* dates — which is exactly why candidates assume they are the same calendar. They are not. SDL windows run about **eleven days** and open one to two weeks *later* than the SBL windows that share their score date. If you are pursuing the new Administrator certificate you will sit both exams, and planning SDL off the SBL calendar is the mistake that costs you a whole cycle. The dates are in the table below, and on the NYSTCE 103/104 test page.

What the assessment is, and who sits it

Two separate tests, scored separately, both required. Test codes **103** and **104**.

The exam

The **NYSTCE School District Leader (SDL) assessment** is New York's district-level administrative licensure exam. It comes in two parts — **Part One (test code 103)** and **Part Two (test code 104)** — and **both are required**. Each part is a 60-item multiple-choice section plus two written assignments, four hours of testing time, scored on its own scale with its own **220** passing score.

You can register for the two parts together or separately. They are scored independently: passing one does not carry over if you fail the other, and you retake only the part you failed.

Who takes it

Candidates for **district-level** administrative roles — the positions NYSED lists as acceptable for the SDL experience requirement are District Superintendent, Superintendent, and Deputy, Associate or Assistant Superintendent (non-civil-service). The role must be administrative in nature: hiring and retention, pedagogical supervision and evaluation, budget preparation and implementation, curriculum development, and non-membership in the teachers' bargaining unit.

The stated experience requirement is **three years of full-time classroom teaching, pupil personnel service, or educational leadership experience**. NYSED's experience page — note it was last updated **October 19, 2020** — is the source. It states no degree requirement; we could not confirm one on any NYSED page, so **we do not state one**. Check the Search Certification Requirements tool in TEACH for yours.

READ THIS BEFORE YOU DECIDE THE SDL IS GOING AWAY

New York is retiring the **SDL certificate** and keeping the **SDL exam**. The January 2025 Regents action created a new **Administrator certificate**, and NYSED's own Q&A says applicants for it must "achieve a passing score on **both parts of the SBL AND SDL exams**," or use the Individual Evaluation Pathway. So 103/104 is not a sunseting test — it is a required test on the *new* pathway, and its candidate pool is about to include every building leader who wants the Administrator certificate. That is consistent with what NYSTCE has published: SDL is **not** on the National Evaluation

Series transition list, it has **no** replacement test code, and it is **not** NYSTCE Flex–eligible. Administrator Certificate Q&A (PDF).

How the two parts are built

Straight from the official test design. This table is why the rest of this site is organized the way it is.

60

Multiple-choice items per part

2

Written assignments per part

50 / 50

MC share / written share, *both* parts

220

Passing score, each part separately

Part	Subarea	Objectives	MC items	MC %	Written assignment	Written %
One (103)	I. Developing, Communicating, and Sustaining an Educational Vision	0001–0004	30	25%	Assignment One — Work Product 150–300 words	17%
	II. Supervising Districtwide Change and Accountability	0005–0008	30	25%	Assignment Two — Case Study 300–600 words	33%
	Total	0001–0008	60	50%	2 assignments	50%
Two (104)	I. Leading the District Educational Program	0001–0005	37	31%	Assignment Two — Educational Program Analysis 300–600 words	33%
	II. Managing District Resources and Compliance	0006–0008	23	19%	Assignment One — Management Problem Solving 150–300 words	17%
	Total	0001–0008	60	50%	2 assignments	50%

Source: NYSED / Evaluation Systems, *School District Leader Test Design and Assessment Framework* (© 2008) and the *Preparation Guide* (© 2009–2010). Counts and percentages are the framework’s own “approximate” figures. The multiple-choice section includes some non-scorable field-test items; every scorable item counts the same.

THE NUMBER PEOPLE GET WRONG

The multiple-choice section is worth **50%** of your score and the two written assignments are the other **50%** — on **Part One and Part Two alike**. Two essays weigh as much as sixty items. The single long assignment is worth **33%** of a whole test — more than every multiple-choice item in an entire subarea of Part One. Studying content and never rehearsing a timed 300–600-word response is studying half the exam.

THE ASYMMETRY ON 104

On both parts, **Assignment One is the short task** (150–300 words, 17%) and **Assignment Two is the long task** (300–600 words, 33%). On 103 that maps the way you would expect — short task from Subarea I, long task from Subarea II. **On 104 it inverts:** the long 33% task, *Educational Program Analysis*, comes from **Subarea I**, and the short 17% task, *Management Problem Solving*, comes from **Subarea II**. Net effect on Part Two: instructional programme content carries 31% of the MC and the 33% essay — roughly two-thirds of the test. Finance, facilities and compliance total 36%.

When you can actually sit it

SDL is **not** offered year-round. It is by appointment during testing windows only — seven published windows across 2026–27, most of them about eleven days long, with gaps of two to five months.

SDL 103 / 104 testing window	Score report date	Days after window closes	SBL 109 / 110 window – for contrast
Apr 22 – May 2, 2026	May 20, 2026	18	Apr 11 – Apr 27, 2026
Jun 17 – Jun 27, 2026	Jul 15, 2026	18	Jun 6 – Jun 22, 2026
Aug 12 – Aug 22, 2026	Sep 9, 2026	18	Aug 1 – Aug 17, 2026
Nov 16 – Nov 26, 2026	Dec 14, 2026	18	Nov 5 – Nov 21, 2026
Feb 10 – Feb 20, 2027	Mar 10, 2027	18	Jan 30 – Feb 15, 2027
Apr 21 – May 1, 2027	May 19, 2027	18	Apr 10 – Apr 26, 2027
Jun 16 – Jun 26, 2027	Jul 14, 2027	18	Jun 5 – Jun 21, 2027

Sources: NYSTCE score report dates, *School Leadership Assessments* (linked from the 103/104 test page as “View testing windows”) · the separate SBL table, shown here only to make the difference visible. Verified August 2026; NYSTCE republishes these each year, so confirm before you register.

TWO THINGS TO TAKE FROM THAT TABLE

One: the score report dates are identical for SDL and SBL, and the windows are not. That coincidence is what makes the mix-up so easy. Every SDL window opens **eleven days later** than the SBL window that shares its score date, and closes **five days later**. If you sit SBL on the first Monday of its window and expect the same date to work for SDL, the SDL centre is not yet open. **Two: scores post at 10:00 p.m. on the score report date**, roughly two and a half weeks after the window closes — and the date is fixed by the window, not by when in the window you tested. Sitting on day one and sitting on day eleven produce the same score date, so there is no advantage in rushing to the front of a window, and there is a real advantage in taking the extra week to prepare.

REGISTRATION

Register at nystce.nesinc.com. A registration is **valid for one year** from its issue date, so you can register now and schedule into a later window. If you neither test nor withdraw within that year, it expires with no refund or credit.

RESCHEDULING

You may reschedule up to **24 hours** before your appointment, and there is **no rescheduling fee**. Cancelling releases your seat — any later appointment is subject to available space, which in an eleven-day window is a real constraint.

REFUNDS

Full refund if you withdraw before scheduling, or cancel at least 24 hours ahead. **No refund if you are absent.** Refunds are usually issued within a week of the request.

Sources: *Withdrawal and refund policy · Changing your registration.*

What it costs

Verified August 2026. Fees change — confirm on the official test page before you pay.

\$169

Part One (103)

\$168

Part Two (104)

\$337

Both Parts — exactly \$169 + \$168

THERE IS NO BUNDLE DISCOUNT — THERE IS A BUNDLE APPOINTMENT

\$169 + \$168 = \$337. Registering for Both Parts saves you nothing. What it buys is a **single appointment covering both parts on one day: 8 hours 40 minutes, including a 40-minute lunch break.** Register the parts separately and, in an eleven-day window with finite seats, you may not be able to get them onto the same day at all. So the choice is not financial — it is a stamina-versus-scheduling choice. Weigh it honestly: eight and a half hours of district-scenario reading and constructed-response writing in one sitting is a demanding day, and if you fail one part you re-register and pay that part's full fee again either way. See Day-Of for a both-parts plan and a use for that 40 minutes.

Source: *NYSTCE School District Leader 103/104 test page.*

How it is scored

Each part is scored and reported on its own. The passing score is **220**.

The two halves

- **220 passes**, on each part, computed separately. There is no combined or averaged SDL score, and no compensation across parts.
- The **multiple-choice section is 50%** of the total test score. Each scorable item counts the same; some items are non-scorable field-test items and you cannot tell which.
- The **written section is the other 50%** — approximately **17%** from Assignment One and approximately **33%** from Assignment Two.
- You may complete the two assignments **in either order** and return to either as time permits.

The three written criteria

Every SDL written response is judged on these three, quoted from the official directions:

- ✓ **PURPOSE** — fulfil 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.

Responses are evaluated on those criteria, **not on writing ability** — but they must be clear enough to permit a valid judgment, and must be your own original work.

Score	What it means
4	Thorough command of the relevant knowledge and skills.
3	General command.
2	Partial command.
1	Little or no command.
U	Unscorable — off topic, not in English, illegible, not original work, or otherwise not scorable.
B	Blank — no response. On the 33% assignment this is unrecoverable.

Source: NYSED / Evaluation Systems School District Leader Preparation Guide, written-assignment directions and performance characteristics.

SDL's criteria are not SBL's — if you have studied SBL material, its completeness / accuracy / depth of support and understanding language does not apply here. Work the SDL wording in the Task Playbook.

Getting your results

- ✓ Score reports post online **beginning at 10:00 p.m. on the score report date** for the window in which you tested.
- ✓ Scores go to NYSED automatically and attach to your certification file.
- ✓ NYSTCE publishes two free explainers on reading the report — How to Read Your Score Report and Understanding Candidate Score Reports.

If you do not pass

You may retake a test until you pass it. Two rules govern when.

The written rule

- You must wait **30 days** after taking the test before retaking the same test. SDL is **not** on NYSTCE's 60-day list — that list is subject-area tests, and 103/104 is not on it.
- You must **reregister and pay the full fee again** each time you retake. There is no retake discount.
- You retake only the part you failed. A passed part stays passed and may not be retaken.

The rule that actually binds

The 30-day wait is almost never what delays you. **The window calendar is.** Look at the table above: after the August 2026 window closes, the next SDL window opens **November 16**. Fail in August and your realistic next attempt is roughly **twelve weeks** away, not four — and your score does not arrive until **September 9**, which leaves about ten weeks to rebuild and re-register.

Unconfirmed: NYSTCE's published retake policy says nothing about retaking inside a single testing window, and we found no official statement on it. Do not plan a same-window second attempt on the assumption that it is allowed — ask Evaluation Systems first.

Source: NYSTCE retake policy for test 103.

PRACTICAL CONSEQUENCE

Because a failed part costs you a whole cycle rather than a month, **the cheapest thing you can buy on this exam is preparation for the written section.** It is 50% of the score, it is the half most candidates under-rehearse, and it is the half where the gap between a 2 and a 3 is procedural — answering every part of the charge, hitting the required counts, supporting each claim — rather than a matter of knowing more.

The score waiver most candidates have never heard of

If you miss the passing score by a very small margin, New York has a route that does not require you to retake the exam. It is real, it is published, and it is easy to miss.

WHAT IT IS

NYSED will consider waiving a required NYSTCE exam score if your score falls **within 0.5 standard error of measurement (SEM) of the passing score** and you meet a grade-point condition. The waiver scores are published per test, and for SDL they are:

Exam	Test code	Passing score	0.5 SEM waiver score	Margin
School District Leader Part One	103	220	212	8 points
School District Leader Part Two	104	220	211	9 points

Source: NYSED Certification Exam Waiver. That page was **last updated June 18, 2026** — recent, but check it again before relying on the figures. The related NYSTCE announcement, “Certification exam waiver process now available,” is dated **February 26, 2025**.

What you must have

- ✓ A score of **212 or higher on 103**, or **211 or higher on 104** — below the 220 pass, but within 0.5 SEM of it.
- ✓ An **overall GPA of 3.5 or higher** on your bachelor’s and/or master’s degree transcripts. NYSED’s wording: check the transcripts to determine whether your overall GPA is 3.5 or higher.
- ✓ The transcript you submit must show **conferral** of the bachelor’s or master’s degree. Coursework in progress does not qualify — the degree must have been awarded.
- ✓ An **active certification application in TEACH** before you submit the waiver request.
- ✓ Transcripts on file should not be more than **five years old**.

How to proceed

- Get your score report and compare it to the waiver score **for that specific part** — 103 and 104 have different thresholds (212 and 211), so check the right row.
- Confirm the degree is conferred and the overall GPA on that degree is 3.5 or higher.
- Apply for the certificate in TEACH so there is an active application on file, and make sure your conferred transcript is on file and current.
- Submit the waiver request following the instructions on <https://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/certexamwaiver.html> — that page is the operative one, and the request procedure and any forms are published there.

We describe the eligibility conditions because NYSED states them plainly. We deliberately do not paraphrase the submission mechanics, form names or processing times — read them off the NYSED page, which is the only version that will be current when you need it.

WHY THIS MATTERS MORE ON SDL THAN ON MOST TESTS

A missed SDL part costs a full window cycle, so an eight-point miss on 103 is the difference between certifying this spring and certifying next winter. Check the waiver scores **before** you register for a retake, not after.

The certification landscape around the exam

New York is mid-transition on administrative certification. None of this changes what is on the test — it changes how long the SDL certificate route stays open, and why the SDL exam does not close with it.

THE REGULATORY ACTION

On **January 13, 2025**, the New York State Board of Regents approved Regulation sections **52.21, 80-1.2, 80-4.3, 80-5.20 and Subpart 80-3**, establishing a new **Administrator certificate** and a **Superintendent Extension**. Institutions could begin applying to register Administrator and Superintendent Extension programs on **January 29, 2025**. NYSED — new Administrator certificate.

Date	What happens
February 1, 2025	NYSED no longer registers preparation programs leading to the current School Building Leader and School District Leader certificates.
September 1, 2030	All registered programs leading to SBL and SDL certification are discontinued on or after this date.
January 1, 2031	Individuals must apply and meet all requirements for the Initial SBL and/or the Professional SDL certificate by this date. The FAQ adds that candidates must also apply and qualify for SBL and SDL Internship certificates, SBL Initial and Conditional Initial certificates, and Transitional D certificates on or before this date.
September 1, 2031	NYSED will no longer issue current SBL and SDL certificates with an effective date beginning after this date — except for the Professional certificate and reissuance of an Initial certificate.

Sources: NYSED Administrator certificate · Administrator Certificate Q&A (PDF).

LEVEL

SDL is a Professional certificate

Note the wording in the January 1, 2031 deadline: it names the **Initial SBL** and the **Professional SDL**. SDL is issued at the Professional level, not the Initial level — a difference worth carrying into any conversation about reissuance or renewal, because the rules that apply to an Initial certificate are not the SDL rules.

WHO NEEDS THE NEW CERTIFICATE

The 25% rule

Educational leaders with **more than 25 percent** of their assignment in a school-level and/or district-level administrative position must obtain the Administrator certificate. The Administrator certificate’s

scope **excludes** a person serving as a **school district business leader** — SDBL sits outside this requirement.

THE EXAM REQUIREMENT

Both exams, or Individual Evaluation

Applicants for the Administrator certificate must pass **both parts of the SBL exam and both parts of the SDL exam**, or use the Individual Evaluation Pathway. If you already hold an SBL, NYSED's Q&A says you can apply for the Administrator certificate and earn a passing score on the SDL exam to fulfil the requirements. The Superintendent Extension is not available directly to an SBL holder — you obtain the Administrator certificate first, then apply for the extension.

ONE QUESTION WE CANNOT ANSWER, AND WILL NOT PRETEND TO

Does an existing SDL certificate holder have to convert to the new Administrator certificate? NYSED's sentence on this reads: individuals who hold a valid **SBL, SAS, or SDA** will not be required to obtain the new Administrator certificate, as those certificates will continue to be recognized. **SDL is not named in that sentence**, and the FAQ answers the parallel question only for SBL. We searched the Administrator certificate page, the new-certificate page, the Q&A PDF and NYSED site search and found **no official statement** either way for SDL. The surrounding language — continued recognition of existing credentials, and the September 1, 2031 carve-out for Professional certificates — strongly implies a valid SDL stays valid. **That is an inference, not an NYSED statement, and this is a question you should not settle from a study site.** Confirm it with NYSED's Office of Teaching Initiatives, or check the Administrator Certificate Decision Tree (PDF), before you make an employment or application decision on it.

What the exam is actually built from

The blueprint is older than most of the vocabulary your preparation programme uses. Both facts matter, and they are not in conflict once you see the split.

The blueprint: the 2008 framework

- The *School District Leader Test Design and Assessment Framework* is © **2008 by the New York State Education Department**; the *Preparation Guide* is © 2009–2010 Pearson.
- SDL was **never revised** the way SBL was. SBL moved from test codes 107/108 to 109/110 with new competencies; SDL 103/104 has kept the same subareas and the same sixteen objectives throughout.
- The framework **cites no external standards set at all** — not PSEL, not ISLLC, not the NYS leadership standards. It is organized solely by its own four subareas and its own objectives 0001–0008 per part.
- Therefore **the scored content is the framework objectives**. That is the document to study, and it is free: the framework PDF. The Cheatsheet compresses all sixteen.

The practice vocabulary: PSEL, NYS Version

- ✓ NYSED separately publishes the **Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL), NYS Version**. The Board of Regents adopted the 2015 PSEL standards in **2017**; the NYS version makes small but significant changes focused on diversity, equity and inclusion. PSEL NYS Version (PDF).
- ✓ Beginning with the **2025–2026** school year, all Principal Practice Rubrics used in Educator Evaluation Plans must align to the NYS version of the PSELs. That is why PSEL is the language you hear in districts and in preparation programmes.

- ✓ **No official crosswalk between the 2008 SDL framework and PSEL exists** as far as we can find — we searched nysed.gov and highered.nysed.gov and found none. Any crosswalk you are handed is somebody’s construction, including ours.

SAY IT PLAINLY

PSEL is the vocabulary of current New York practice. The 2008 framework objectives are the blueprint of this test. They overlap heavily in substance — vision, instructional programme, capacity, data, ethics, resources, compliance — because good district leadership did not change in 2015. But if you study PSEL domains expecting them to be the scored categories, you will find content the framework tests (BOCES structure, the Commissioner’s §310 appeal, district financial and facilities management, compliance supervision) that PSEL does not organize you toward. **Speak PSEL in your district; write the framework on the test.** Do not accept any claim — including a confident one — that SDL is aligned to PSEL. It is not, on the face of its own framework.

The free official materials — every one of them

Everything NYSTCE publishes for SDL is free. This is the complete list as of August 2026. If someone is charging you for “the official study guide,” these are the documents they are reselling.

Document	What it gives you	Link
Test Design and Assessment Framework, 103/104	The blueprint tables and all sixteen objectives with their descriptive bullets. 15 pages, © 2008. The single most important free document.	PDF
Preparation Guide (complete)	“Preparing for the Test” plus both parts’ sample questions and written assignments in one file. 47 pages. This is the SDL study guide — the NYSTCE Study Guides index links to it.	PDF
Part One sample questions and written assignments	Nine sample selected-response items with the annotated answer key and objective tags, the written-assignment directions, and a sample Work Product and Case Study with strong responses and evaluations. 18 pages.	PDF
Part Two sample questions and written assignments	The same for 104: nine annotated items, plus sample Management Problem Solving and Educational Program Analysis assignments with strong responses. 22 pages.	PDF
How to Read Your Score Report	What each block on the report means.	PDF
Understanding Candidate Score Reports	The longer explainer, including how subarea performance is reported.	PDF
Computer-based testing tutorials	The interface you will meet in the 15 minutes before the clock starts. Worth ten minutes at home.	Tutorials
Pearson Professional Centers tour	A walkthrough of check-in, security and the testing room. Linked from the preparation materials page.	Prep materials
Test policies	ID rules, prohibited items, conduct, what happens if you arrive late.	Policies
Alternative testing arrangements	How to request accommodations. Request these before you schedule — they take time.	Requesting

All fetched and verified 2026-08-05 from the NYSTCE 103/104 preparation materials page.

THERE IS NO OFFICIAL SDL PRACTICE TEST — AND HERE IS EXACTLY HOW STRONG THAT CLAIM IS

NYSTCE sells online practice tests for various fields, starting at \$11.00 with 120-day access. **School District Leader does not appear to be one of them.** The SDL preparation materials page contains no practice-test link and the phrase “Practice Test” does not appear on it at all. Be clear about what that evidence is: **it is silence, not an affirmative statement.** The NYSTCE practice-test page does not enumerate which fields are covered, so we cannot point to a sentence saying SDL is excluded — only to the SDL page’s total absence of one. We treat “no official full-length SDL practice test” as strongly supported and clearly unconfirmed. Practically: the eighteen annotated sample items and four sample written assignments in the free guides are the entire official item supply, which is why the Practice bank on this site exists and why it labels every item’s provenance.

Commercial SDL “study guides” and “practice tests” are not official, are not reviewed by NYSED, and are not on this list.

What this site is – and what it is not

Read this before you memorize anything here.

Official material, reproduced and labelled

- ✓ The **subarea and objective language** throughout the site is quoted or compressed from the NYSED assessment framework (© 2008).
- ✓ The **eighteen official sample selected-response items** — nine per part — appear in Practice marked **official**, with **NYSED’s own published rationales** and objective tags.
- ✓ The **four sample written assignments**, the published **strong responses** and their **evaluations**, and the **three scoring criteria** and four-point scale in the Task Playbook come from the official Preparation Guide.
- ✓ Legal, finance and certification facts on Law & Ops carry inline citations to statute, regulation or an official page.

Practitioner-written — useful, not authoritative

- ✗ The **25 answer patterns** are an inferred model of how this exam rewards answers, argued from eighteen official items and their rationales. NYSED has never published anything like them, and eighteen items is a small evidence base — that page says so itself.
- ✗ Items marked **adapted** or **practice** in the bank carry **practitioner-written rationales**, not NYSED rationales. Where a practice rationale and an official one disagree, the official one wins.
- ✗ The **response skeletons** in the Task Playbook and the **pacing plans** in Day-Of are one reasonable approach among several. The test allocates no time per section; every internal split you see here is ours.
- ✗ Nothing here is a leaked or reconstructed live form. Anyone selling you that is selling you a problem.

FREE

No cost, no sign-up, no catch. Use it, print it, share it with your cohort, put it on a programme’s resource page, fork it and change it.

UNAFFILIATED

Not affiliated with, endorsed by, or reviewed by NYSED, the NYSTCE programme, Pearson or Evaluation Systems. Official sample items and rubrics are reproduced for study and remain the property of their publishers.

PRIVATE AND OFFLINE

No accounts, no tracking, nothing stored anywhere. Practice and Quiz Mode keep score in memory only and reset on reload — deliberately, so you can redo a set honestly. Every page works offline once loaded.

VERIFY ANYTHING DECISION-CRITICAL

Windows, fees, policies, waiver scores and certification rules were checked against official sources in **August 2026** and will drift. Before you spend money or miss a deadline on the strength of something you read here, confirm it at nystce.nesinc.com and on NYSED's certification site. The Sources page links every official document directly. Corrections — a dead link, a stale fee, a rationale you think is wrong — are the most useful thing you can send back.

A study sequence for the nine pages

In order. Each step assumes the one before it.

#	Page	What to do there	Time
1	Start Here THIS PAGE	Fix the logistics first: pick your window, check the fee, decide one part or both in a day, and diary the score date. Everything else is easier once the calendar is settled.	30 min, once
2	Cheatsheet	Learn the blueprint cold — four subareas, sixteen objectives, the 50/50 split, the 17/33 written weights and the 104 inversion. Then read the free framework PDF once end to end alongside it.	2–3 hours
3	Answer Patterns	Twenty-five patterns in seven groups, plus the distractor taxonomy and the 60-second elimination checklist. This is the page that changes how you read a stem.	2 hours
4	Task Playbook	The half of the exam most candidates neglect. Learn the three criteria, the four-point scale, and one skeleton per task type — Work Product, Case Study, Management Problem Solving, Educational Program Analysis. Read the official strong responses and their evaluations.	3–4 hours
5	Law & Ops	The dense, memorizable half of Subarea II on both parts: governance, the budget cycle and tax levy limit, reserves and internal controls, purchasing, tenure and §3020-a, the Taylor Law, APPR, IDEA and Part 200, civil rights, §2-d, ESSA. Work it in passes, not in one sitting.	6–10 hours
6	Practice	99 items across 17 scenarios. Do the 18 official items first and read every NYSED rationale , then the rest. Read the rationale on items you got right too — that is where the pattern lives.	4–6 hours
7	Quiz Mode	Recall drilling on the material Law & Ops and the Cheatsheet cover. Best done out loud, in short sessions, in the last two weeks.	20 min a day
8	Task Playbook, again	Now write. Two full timed responses per part, hand-scored against the three criteria — a 300–600 word Assignment Two and a 150–300 word Assignment One. Untimed rehearsal does not prepare you for the thing that actually goes wrong.	4 hours
9	Day-Of	Read it a week out and again the night before: the pacing plan, the checkpoints, what to bring, and what to do when Assignment Two is running long.	30 min
—	Sources	Throughout. Every official document linked directly, with what each one is and how far it can be trusted.	as needed

IF YOU ONLY HAVE ONE WEEK

Read the **Cheatsheet** blueprint and the sixteen objectives. Read **Answer Patterns** once. Work the **18 official items** in Practice and read every NYSED rationale. Memorize the skeletons and the three criteria in the **Task Playbook**, then write **one full timed Assignment Two** for the part you are sitting — the 33% task is the highest-value hour on this site. Drill the numbers on **Law & Ops**. Read **Day-Of** the night before and then stop.

PART II

Answer Patterns

Twenty-five recurring reasoning patterns in the SDL selected-response items, each traced to a specific official rationale — plus a named taxonomy of wrong-answer shapes, the discipline of “most important” versus “first,” and a sixty-second elimination checklist.

HOW TO READ THIS PAGE

A **pattern** is a regularity in how the correct answers behave — the move the official rationales keep praising, item after item. A **rule** is what the law requires. The exam treats them differently: on the few items that test a legal standard the rule wins outright and pattern-reading will not save you; on the large majority — the judgment items — every option is lawful, and the pattern is what separates the key from three defensible near-misses. Use patterns for triage, not for authority. When a pattern and the stem disagree, the stem wins.

THE EVIDENCE BASE, AND ITS LIMITS

NYSED and Pearson publish exactly **18 official SDL sample selected-response items** — nine per part, each with a published rationale and objective tag — plus four sample written assignments with strong responses and official evaluations. Small, and old (© 2009–2010). So every pattern below is also checked against other **official Pearson superintendent guides** built on the same item architecture: Illinois Field 225 (© 2017, full rationales for 20 items), Indiana Field 040, Missouri Superintendent, and the retired Oklahoma 048 guide (© 2007). Patterns holding in an official SDL item *and* at least one other official guide carry a **CORROBORATED** flag. A few supporting citations come from a locally written, **practitioner-authored** NY district practice bank; those are marked **PRACTITIONER** inline and never carry a pattern alone. Out-of-state items are cited for the shape of the reasoning only — never carry an Illinois or Oklahoma statutory rule into a NY answer.

CITATION CONVENTION

SDL Part One item 5, objective 0004 = the fifth selected-response question in the official NYSTCE School District Leader Preparation Guide, Part One, as keyed and tagged in the published annotated answer key. **Illinois Field 225 item 12** = the twelfth sample question in Pearson’s official Illinois Superintendent study guide. Named assignments refer to the published sample assignments with their strong responses and official evaluations. Every citation points at something you can open and check.

A · Whose decision is this?

SDL scenarios routinely hand you a decision that is not yours to make, or is yours to make but not yours to announce. The first cut on a district item is jurisdictional.

1 Treat the vision as a shared image of the future that steers improvement — not a marketing document, a strategic plan, or a set of collaboration rules.

Every option in a vision item describes something a real vision statement partly does. The key gets the *function* right: an agreed picture of the future, owned by stakeholders, that becomes the reference point when you decide what to change. Audience effect, technical alignment and procedural content are by-products.

Proof: SDL Part One item 2, objective 0002. Key: “guiding and directing district improvement by articulating a clear image of the future ... based on stakeholders’ ideals and beliefs.” Rationale: the vision “becomes a reference point for identifying areas for educational change.”

Kills: **vision-as-PR** (“garnering public support by defining the primary functions of the district”), **vision-as-strategic-plan** (“providing a strategic road map ... aligned with the district’s philosophy of education”), and vision-as-governance-rules. A road map is what you build *after* the vision.

2 Once the governing body has voted, support the decision publicly and turn to implementing it. Stop relitigating.

The sharpest role item in the official set. You advised; you were overruled; the correct move is to say you support the decision and work out how to carry it out. Three of the four options are what a competent, well-intentioned superintendent actually feels like doing after losing a vote — and all three keep your preference alive inside a decision that is no longer yours.

Proof: SDL Part One item 5, objective 0004. Key: “communicate support for the decision made by the majority ... and determine how best to implement it.” Rationale: leaders “must adhere to any decisions made by that body ... They should not be driven by a personal agenda that conflicts with such decisions.”

Kills: **continued advocacy** (advise them on the costs and benefits of the approach they chose — helpfulness in form, an I-told-you-so on retainer in function); the **faction** option (work with the members who agreed with you toward a compromise); **proxy lobbying** (urge your allies to accept it), which outsources your own acceptance. Even the mildest loses.

3 Treat the board as one body, informed early and equally — especially on the budget. Give them consequences, not conclusions. CORROBORATED

Board items reward two things at once: **equal access** — no private pre-work with friendly members, no relying on the president to whip votes — and **early substantive involvement** on matters the board owns. On budgets you confer while *building* the proposal, not when presenting it. During deliberation your contribution is information about impact, not an advocacy position that ties you to a faction.

Proof: Illinois Field 225 item 5, objective 0003 — key is “conferring with the board while preparing the proposed budget so that the budget will reflect district goals and priorities.” Indiana Field 040 item 15 — with cuts coming, key is “sharing information with board members about the likely impact of alternative budget cuts on the delivery of services and the achievement of district goals.”

Oklahoma 048 item 6 — “work with all members of the board as equals and ensure that they all have access to the same information.” Oklahoma 048 item 8 — in a split board debate the superintendent supplies research on effects, because “the superintendent should not become identified with any particular faction.” Illinois item 4 fixes the other boundary: the board’s sole personnel authority runs to the superintendent; it sets policy, you administer it.

Kills: the **board-faction** option (“conferring individually with board members who have been supportive”); **outside pressure** (asking business owners to lobby members); **assertion of authority** (“be assertive with the board in exercising authority as the chief administrative officer”); and **advocacy** on a question the board is elected to settle. PRACTITIONER The NY practice bank echoes the shape: a board member’s request for a favour is routed into an existing public process — counsel briefs the whole board; the purchase goes out to public bid.

B · What you do before you act

Most wrong SDL answers are correct actions placed one step too early. The exam keeps a strict sequence, and the stem always tells you where in it you are standing.

4Engage the people affected before you make the case, not after you have built it.

CORROBORATED

When a stem says “before making a case” or “to begin the process,” every option that produces something — a plan, a press preview, a data package — is an output, and outputs come later. The key is an input. The published reasoning is instrumental, not sentimental: this is how you learn to introduce change in a way that reads as “positive and nonthreatening.”

Proof: SDL Part One item 6, objective 0005. Key: “using face-to-face interactions to learn about the priorities, attitudes, and concerns of relevant interest groups.” Rationale: they “allow the district leader to assess informally where resistance is likely to arise.” Oklahoma 048 item 1: a new vision begins with a districtwide needs assessment that “gives all segments of the community a chance to be heard.” Illinois Field 225 item 1: you recruit parents onto a vision committee by ensuring “members have a voice in and can affect committee decision making.”

Kills: the **premature output** family — an action plan nobody was consulted on; a media preview that goes public before going internal; disseminating your own data analysis, which broadcasts your rationale instead of hearing theirs. Also **light-touch recruitment**: people join committees that matter, not committees that are convenient.

5When the stem says the listening is already done, the next move is designing solutions with stakeholders — not launching one.

Watch the tense. If the superintendent “has reviewed relevant data and has spoken to many individuals and groups,” you are past diagnosis and the gather-more-information answers are now wrong — but you are not yet at implementation. The rewarded step is the one candidates skip: convening the people who know the schools to define what programs and services should do differently.

Proof: SDL Part Two item 7, objective 0003 — the Rockridge set (violence, drug use, absenteeism, declining graduation rates for some groups, weak career-and-technology job placement). Key: “seeking guidance from school and community stakeholder groups in defining ways in which school programs and services can better address current needs.” Rationale: “Only after promising solutions have been identified and explored will Dr. Owens be in a position to take specific actions.”

Kills: the **narrow slice** — a career-skills resource centre answering one of five listed problems. The **blame-shift campaign** — alerting families and “challeng[ing] them to take personal action,” relocating a district problem into households. The **money-first** option, expanding funding before anyone has defined what to fund.

6 Define and scope the need before you cost it, staff it, or take it to the board. CORROBORATED

Capital and operations items follow a fixed order: assess actual condition → define scope and priorities → build the case → go to the board. The tell for a wrong option is that it asks decision-makers for something before anyone can say how bad the problem is or what it costs.

Proof: SDL Part Two item 5, objective 0007 — six of fifteen schools over fifty years old. Key: “directing district staff to investigate and identify the specific needs and inadequacies of each building.” Rationale: “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.” Illinois Field 225 item 15 tests the same sequence: the first step in a five-year capital plan is hiring an outside consultant to inspect, because staff and stakeholders “may not have the expertise to recognize possible structural needs over cosmetic needs.”

Kills: the **board takeover** — requesting fiscal support for a construction proposal that does not exist yet. **Process before substance** — a committee to select a consultant. The **inspiration tour** of nice buildings elsewhere. In Illinois, the **wish list**: asking principals or families what they want, which yields preferences rather than condition. **Read the two together** — NY says use your staff, Illinois says hire an outsider, and in each item the key is simply the only option producing a technical assessment of what is actually wrong with the buildings. The staffing choice is scenery.

7 The first question about any proposed fix is whether it addresses the cause of the problem in front of you. CORROBORATED

The most transferable single move on the exam, always contested by three sensible alternatives: has it worked elsewhere, will staff support it, how fast will results show. All three are real programme-selection criteria. None is first, because none establishes that the option touches what is actually broken here.

Proof: SDL Part One item 8, objective 0006. Key: “Would this option be effective in addressing key causes of students’ lagging achievement?” Rationale: “stakeholders must first ensure that any option selected will address whatever is responsible for the students’ current achievement problems.” Indiana Field 040 item 8 is the mirror image: overall performance is up but one group has consistently declined, and the “most important initial priority” is determining “those factors that are most likely contributing to the observed performance of the lower-scoring group.”

Kills: **borrowed proof** (“Has this option worked well in other districts?”) — another district’s success is evidence about another district’s causes. The **popularity test** (“Are most teachers likely to be inclined to support this option?”) — buy-in matters to implementation and not at all to whether the option is right. The **timeline** question. In Indiana, **resource-first**, answering a question nobody has asked.

8 Before you act on a number, make sure it means what you think it means.

Three official rationales attack the same failure from three angles: acting without a baseline, acting on a single year, and acting on a result produced under conditions you never checked. Each keyed answer is a verification step that looks like a delay and is not. This is what makes objective 0007 more than “use data” — the exam wants you sceptical of your own evidence first.

Proof: Illinois Field 225 item 2 — to monitor a mathematics goal the team must *first* collect baseline data, because “the district must understand the starting point.” Illinois item 8 — a school shows a first-ever one-year decline in reading growth, and the right action in the principal’s summative evaluation is reviewing other sources to see whether the decline is consistent, because “a one-year decline could be attributed to many factors.” Illinois item 9 — when students with disabilities score lower than before, ask first whether every accommodation they were eligible for was actually delivered during testing.

Kills: **premature judgment** — rating a principal “unsatisfactory” on instructional leadership off one year. **Premature intervention** — observing classrooms or building quarterly assessments before you know where you started. And the plausible-but-second diagnostics (test-taking strategies, staffing levels, absenteeism) that all presume the score is valid. **No SDL sample item tests this directly;** it rests on three official Illinois items, confirmed in spirit by the SDL Educational Program Analysis, whose strong response reads three years of scores and compares against both similar districts and the state before calling anything a weakness.

C · The unit of analysis is the district

The group that most reliably separates SDL candidates from strong building-leader candidates. The move that earns a point in a school is frequently the distractor in a district.

9 Address the system that allowed the failure, not the person who committed it.

The clearest demonstration in the official corpus. A principal misspends grant funds, admits it at once and volunteers to file the amendment; the superintendent then discovers that *nobody* is monitoring grants, that several principals administer several each, and that fiscal accountability is inconsistent districtwide. The published strong response never disciplines the principal. It builds oversight, names a programme administrator, writes a handbook and trains everyone involved.

Proof: SDL Part Two, Sample Management Problem Solving Assignment, strong response and official evaluation. The response names “the need to create a comprehensive system of oversight and management of the district’s entire grant system” and “the need to provide all involved staff with training,” reasoning that errors “will recur without a management system that includes comprehensive oversight and systematic training for personnel at all levels.” The evaluation credits exactly that.

Kills: the **incident fix** — any option whose subject is singular: requiring the one principal to file the amendment, memo-ing this error, disciplining him. Note what the exam also refuses to do: it does not shut the grant programme down, because the stem says the superintendent “does not want to dampen the enthusiasm of grant writers or eliminate this significant source of revenue.” The key protects the upside *and* controls the risk; an option doing only one is incomplete.

10 When some schools do it well and some do not, the inconsistency itself is the finding.

District items often plant a sentence saying a practice exists in *some* schools. That word is load-bearing. The rewarded reading is not “good, we have a model to spread” and not “bad, that school is failing” — it is that families get different service depending on which building their child attends, and that is a district-level equity problem with a district-level remedy.

Proof: SDL Part One, Sample Work Product Assignment (immigrant family engagement). The stem notes translators “whenever possible” and that “one school was able to find a bilingual volunteer.” The strong response makes that the case for acting: “Some, but not all, district schools have already provided interpreters/translators and language tutors ... A districtwide plan would help ensure that all parental communication needs ... are met consistently and effectively.” The official evaluation cites “strategies in place at only some schools.”

Kills: the **exemplar-spreading** option that celebrates the strong school and asks the rest to copy it, and **single-school remediation** that treats the weak school as the problem. Both leave the district without a standard. Note the rest of that response: the superintendent’s role is to chair, facilitate, promote consensus, ensure immigrant families’ ideas are incorporated, provide resources and present the plan to the board — not to author it.

11 Set the districtwide standard first; then ask each building to write its plan against that standard.

The exam's house structure for change, and it dissolves the choice candidates think they are being forced to make. District policy sets the expectation and the accountability frame; the building plan supplies fit and ownership. An option that does only the first is a mandate; an option that does only the second is drift.

Proof: SDL Part One, Sample Case Study (Dr. Jacobson and the two middle schools). The recommended actions run in order: talk to the governing body about the need for districtwide professional development standards; issue a clarifying statement and announce a districtwide committee with stakeholders from each school; then "once districtwide policies and procedures are developed ... request that each principal develop a plan ... aligned with district guidelines," which "will give principals an opportunity to demonstrate building-level commitment ... and will help establish accountability for results." Oklahoma 048 item 10 tests the calibration edge: a districtwide crisis plan and interagency coordination suit every school, while mandating "a uniform set of safety measures (e.g., metal detectors, security guards)" everywhere is wrong, because "different schools in a district frequently confront different discipline and violence problems."

Kills: the **one-building fix** — any option naming one school, principal or department inside a district-level stem — and its opposite, the **uniform-practice mandate**. The joint rule: *standardise the policy and the accountability, localise the practice*.

12 Never reorganise people out of frustration, and never float a personnel move you have not decided on.

The Case Study exists largely to punish this. Dr. Jacobson meets resistance, considers swapping the two middle school principals, and mentions it to them the afternoon before a board meeting; by the time the meeting starts, staff and parents from both schools are asking the board to intervene. Two errors are scored: acting on frustration, and letting a half-formed personnel idea escape.

Proof: SDL Part One Case Study strong response: she "was also impulsive and acted out of frustration when she told the principals that she was considering switching their school assignments, and her approach to forcing change created a hostile situation." The official evaluation credits "recognizing that a top-down decision to change positions of principals is not an effective way to initiate change." The corrective is a clarifying statement that the principals stay put, to "dispel rumors."

Kills: the **personnel shuffle** (transfer, reassign, swap, restructure reporting lines) offered as a change strategy; the **forcing** option — "take a proactive role in forcing change" is the case study's own phrase, used immediately before everything goes wrong; and the **trial balloon**, telling people you are "considering" something that would upend their working lives. If you would not want it in tomorrow's paper, you have not decided it yet.

D · Capacity, change and accountability

The SDL has a consistent theory of how districts get people to do things, and it is not compliance.

13 Train people to do the thing. Do not require them to do the thing.

The cleanest capacity item in the official set, because it deliberately puts three motivational strategies against one skill strategy. Staff are to be held accountable for acting on bullying and harassment. The distractors explain why they should act, publicise the problem, and rewrite the evaluation criteria. The key trains them in how to identify an incident and what to do.

Proof: SDL Part Two item 2, objective 0002. Key: "providing all staff with explicit training in how to identify and respond to incidents involving student bullying and harassing." Rationale: it would ensure "a clear understanding of what constitutes bullying or harassing behavior as defined by the district" and "promote greater consistency in how staff members respond."

Kills: the **compliance bolt-on**, here in its purest published form — "revising the criteria used for staff performance evaluations to include behavior and attitudes related to student bullying and harassing." Adding a behaviour to the rubric is not the same as making people able to perform it. Also the **rationale broadcast** (communicating why action is needed), necessary and insufficient; and the **awareness campaign**, addressed to the public rather than the practitioners. Hear "require all," "mandate," "specify a date by which" and "add to the evaluation criteria" as alarm words.

14A culture of accountability is built by differentiated, ongoing support – not by announcing a deadline. CORROBORATED

Objective 0008 is “promoting accountability,” and its official item does something candidates find counter-intuitive: the accountability answer is a *support* answer. Providing differentiated professional development is what communicates high expectations about staff responsibility. A deadline without support is just exposure.

Proof: SDL Part One item 9, objective 0008. Key: “offering ongoing, differentiated professional development to support school staff as they strive to implement the new ELA program.” Rationale: it “communicates high expectations regarding their responsibility ... and reinforces the idea that everyone is accountable.” Illinois Field 225 item 11 runs the same logic individually: when reviewing performance standards with staff, emphasise that the district will provide the resources needed, because the message must be “we expect you to meet these performance standards, and we will support you in getting there.”

Kills: the **deadline** (“specifying a date by which the new ELA program will be expected to be fully implemented”) — the pure compliance answer, always available. The **static resource** (“setting up a library of support materials”) — a shelf is not support. The **external communication** option. From Illinois, the **carrot** (rewards) and the **stick** (consequences).

15Hold the expectation high and supply the means. Never adjust a standard downward to fit current performance.

A standing distractor across every Pearson leadership guide is the option that quietly lowers the bar: modify the standards if they prove too challenging, redefine the goal as “more realistic,” treat identical treatment as equity. The exam rejects all of them, and the softer versions too — empathy, tolerance and same-for-everyone instruction all score below holding every student to one high standard and adapting instruction so they reach it.

Proof: Illinois Field 225 item 11, distractor D — “procedures for modifying the standards if they prove too challenging” — is wrong. Indiana Field 040 item 12: a districtwide culture of achievement comes from “setting high and demanding academic expectations for every student and monitoring progress,” because “adult expectations play a key role in shaping students’ confidence and motivation.” Missouri item 5: with a five-year gap unremoved, “defining a more realistic goal, such as reducing the achievement gap by a specified percentage rather than eliminating it” is a distractor. Missouri item 2 draws the equity line: the sentiment best signalling an equitable climate is “I hold every student to high academic and behavioral standards and do my best to help each student achieve those standards” — over empathy, over tolerance, and over giving every student “the same instruction.”

Kills: the **lowered bar** in all its forms and the **same-treatment** option that mistakes uniformity for fairness. **An honest limit:** the 2008 SDL framework has no equity or social-justice competency of its own; equity surfaces in SDL rationales as consistency across schools, access, and subgroup performance. Use the district’s own language — all schools, all families, all students, consistently.

16Give the data back to the group that generated it, and let them plan the response. CORROBORATED

When a team has produced information about itself, the exam will offer an efficient option in which the leader analyses the results and introduces the changes. It loses every time. The key routes analysis *and* action-planning through the group, for three published reasons at once: recognition of the need, ownership of the solution, and a wider range of ideas.

Proof: SDL Part Two item 4, objective 0006. Key: “The team analyzes and discusses the results of the questionnaire, then plans action steps to improve weak areas of team functioning.” Rationale: it should “help all team members recognize the need for improvement,” let them “participate in generating solutions,” and “increase team members’ acceptance of adopted solutions.” The SDL Part One Case Study gives the district-scale version: a districtwide stakeholder committee “could enhance problem solving, increase acceptance of change, and promote a general sense of commitment.” Illinois Field 225 item 1 gives the recruitment corollary.

Kills: the **efficiency trap** — “The team leader analyzes the results, then introduces appropriate changes.” The **expert bypass** — leader plus HR director analyse and bring recommendations. The **strengths-only** option, participation without consequence. All three are faster than the key. Efficiency is not the criterion.

17 Professional learning that touches practice beats professional learning that discusses practice.

Where several options are all legitimate professional development, the winner is the one where adults do the thing, in a real classroom, and get feedback. Reading, agreeing, surveying and lecturing are preparatory.

Proof: Illinois Field 225 item 10, objective 0006. With improved teacher questioning as the priority goal, the key is “Team members observe questioning techniques in one another’s classrooms, then meet to discuss strengths and needs,” because “only choice ‘A’ provides the opportunity for the teachers to put the theory ... into practice.” The SDL Educational Program Analysis stages the negative example in its documents: the district’s published professional development schedule is a restraint-training demonstration, “Differentiated Instruction (Lecture and Video),” “Collaborative Learning (Lecture),” an early-retirement union panel and a vendor walkthrough — none of it targeted to the middle-school problem the other documents establish.

Kills: the **reading group**, the **plan-in-advance** option (agree on the questions to use in a lesson), and the **survey-about-practice** option. More broadly, any professional development option that is generic rather than tied to the need the stem established.

PRACTITIONER The NY practice bank makes the same complaint from the principals’ side: a centrally planned professional development agenda, with no needs assessment and no staff involvement, draws displeasure rather than relief.

E · Working through building leaders

Two official Part Two items sit on objective 0004 — supporting building leaders, teachers and staff. Both reward the same instinct and punish the substitutes for it.

18 When principals are overloaded, remove the load the district is generating. That is the part you control.

A principal reports unprecedented stress and says his colleagues feel it too. Three options offer things a caring superintendent does: an overtime-limiting policy, a recommitment to the vision, public and private gratitude. The key instead reduces district-generated demands and puts structures in place so building leaders are not isolated.

Proof: SDL Part Two item 9, objective 0004. Key: “taking steps to protect building leaders from extraneous demands and to ensure that they do not feel isolated.” Rationale — the sharpest sentence in the official set: she cannot eliminate the daily challenges, but “she can control the number and nature of the demands placed on building leaders by the district,” with regular check-ins with individual leaders and small groups given as the mechanism.

Kills: the **morale substitute** — gratitude or renewed commitment to the vision offered instead of relief. The **unenforceable rule** — a districtwide policy limiting overtime, which caps the hours without reducing the work. Generalise it: *when several options address the problem, prefer the one whose lever the actor in the stem actually holds.*

19 Answer entrenched negativity with sustained two-way engagement, not with a letter, a lecture, or a seminar.

Long-serving staff are complaining about change rather than working on it. The key begins an ongoing dialogue supporting innovation and leadership at the building level, with reassurance that the district will back positive action at the school level. The three losing options are all single events, and one of them is a dressing-down.

Proof: SDL Part Two item 8, objective 0004. Key: “begin an ongoing dialogue with district administrators and faculty to support innovation and leadership at the building level.” Compare Oklahoma 048 item 2, where resistance to decentralised decision-making is best met by “pointing out how the planned changes support the vision and educational goals agreed on by district stakeholders” — connecting the change to something the resisters already agreed to.

Kills: the **one-way broadcast** — an open letter acknowledging the problems and outlining her plans. The **expectations lecture** — convening senior faculty “for the purpose of clarifying the attitudes and behavior she expects from them,” the punitive answer in a professional collar. The **outsourced morale** option — seminars “on how to achieve a sense of empowerment in the workplace.” Note the near-miss in the Oklahoma item: promising to evaluate outcomes and modify as necessary is *true* and still second-best.

F · Communicating as a superintendent

Objective 0003 on Part One is communication, and it carries two of the nine official Part One items — a higher density than any other objective. Treat it as heavily weighted.

20 Write for the reader you actually have. Remove the jargon rather than defining it.

A budget letter to parents opens with “expenditure forecast document” and “fiscal commitments going forward.” Three options improve it: add real figures, warm up the opening sentence, define the technical terms. The key is more radical — simpler language and a less bureaucratic tone throughout, because the rationale identifies the register itself as the barrier, not a surface to be annotated.

Proof: SDL Part One item 3, objective 0003. Key: “using simpler language and a less bureaucratic tone.” Rationale: the leader “uses language and concepts with which some parents/guardians are likely to be unfamiliar ... as well as a bureaucratic tone that can be a barrier to understanding.”

Kills: the **tone fix** — a friendlier opening on top of an opaque document. The **glossary fix** — defining the technical terms, which preserves the register and adds length. The **precision fix** — replacing vague references with actual figures, good practice answering a different complaint. All three would improve the letter; only one removes the barrier.

21 Every channel excludes someone. A single channel is never the answer. CORROBORATED

Asked what is most important to be aware of when moving a parent communication to the district website, the exam picks access: some of the intended audience have no ready internet access, and some who do will never check the site. The rationale generalises it — the website “should be viewed as only one part of a more comprehensive approach that incorporates multiple means of communication.”

Proof: SDL Part One item 4, objective 0003. Key: “some members of the intended audience may not have ready access to the Internet or may not regularly check the district Web site.” Indiana Field 040 item 13 runs it proactively: where schools do little outreach, the first move is “multiple communication options to expand and simplify two-way communication with families with diverse characteristics and preferences.” The SDL Work Product strong response applies it to language, noting that notices sent in both the family’s language and English raised attendance.

Kills: the **wrong-risk** distractors, the interesting part here. “Many individuals other than those in the intended audience will be able to access the information” (true, and not a problem for a public budget letter). “Information posted on the Internet can be easily modified or deleted” (a security concern, not a communication concern). “Most people place greater trust in information received by mail” (an unsupported empirical claim). When an option asserts a fact about human behaviour the stem never gave you, be suspicious.

22 Match the method to the kind of information you need — and read a conditional stem as the answer key.

A management team is choosing between a questionnaire and interviews. The stem does not ask which is better; it asks when the interview approach is most appropriate. That framing means the key is simply what interviews are uniquely good for — depth, elaboration, follow-up — and the three distractors are arguments for the *other* method sitting in the wrong item.

Proof: SDL Part One item 7, objective 0007. Key: “elicit detailed, in-depth responses from stakeholders.” Rationale: because interviews “involve speaking rather than writing, they make it easier for respondents to provide detailed, thoughtful answers,” and their interactive nature “allows the interviewer to seek clarification of or elaboration on responses.”

Kills: the **transplanted virtue** — minimising cost, producing easily interpreted data, and reaching a large representative sample are all real advantages, of questionnaires. This is a whole genre: an option stating a true benefit of the alternative you were not asked about. When a stem sets up a conditional (“most appropriate if an important goal is to...”), your job is matching, not judging.

23 One message, one topic – and choose the number that shows the human consequence.

Communications carrying a single topic get read; communications carrying everything get skimmed. And when you must persuade a board or a community with financial data, the winning presentation is not the most complete one — it is the one that converts money into something people already understand.

Proof: Illinois Field 225 item 13, objective 0008: important school information is best presented by “focusing on a single topic of interest,” because “due to the wealth of information to which people are exposed each day, it is important to make any communication meaningful and succinct.” Illinois item 16, objective 0009: against further budget cuts the most compelling presentation is “a graph indicating an upward trend in average class size due to teacher cuts” — a “highly researched and easily understood concept.”

Kills: the **completeness** option — the exhaustive table of budget declines, the pie chart of function codes, the list of everything cut. The **opinion blend**, mixing information and opinion. The **consensus voice**, a statement reflecting agreement among school officials, which is about the sender rather than the receiver. The rule: *a dollar figure means nothing until you say what it buys or costs a child.*

G · Duty, due process and compliance

A minority of items — and the ones where pattern-reading fails and knowledge is required.

24 Before you support an adverse personnel action, verify that the building leader did the job properly. Do not redo it, and do not accept a substitute record. CORROBORATED

A principal asks you to back the termination of a tenured teacher. The one thing you must have is documentation that the teacher was told what was wrong and given real support and opportunity to improve. Notice what the key is *not*: not you re-investigating the teacher, and not evidence about the teacher’s outcomes. Your district-level role is to confirm the process was sound before attaching the district’s authority to it.

Proof: SDL Part Two item 3, objective 0005. Key: “documentation of actions taken in an effort to remediate the teacher’s weaknesses.” Rationale: “Tenured teachers have a right to be protected from arbitrary dismissal ... 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.” Indiana Field 040 item 6 states the duty behind it: the practice a superintendent should most urgently eliminate is principals “negotiating transfers to other local schools of tenured teachers whose performance ... has been marginal.” Indiana item 5: be most concerned about the principal who makes minimal time to monitor and give feedback on teaching.

Kills: the **wrong record** — “student records that illustrate the teacher’s inability to provide adequate instruction” (outcomes are not a substitute for a documented improvement process) and “a record of all disciplinary actions taken against the teacher” (a different case from incompetence). The **wrong theory** — code-of-conduct violations, supporting a different proceeding. The **end-run**, investigating around the principal instead of auditing the principal’s work. **PRACTITIONER** The NY practice bank corroborates the shape: an allegation against a teacher on an overnight trip is answered by investigation, witness statements and referral to district counsel, not by a demand for resignation.

25 On a legal item, the answer is what the standard says — not what good practice would want it to say.

Compliance items are built so the generous-sounding option is wrong. The published FAPE item is the model: “maximum potential” sounds like what a committed superintendent would promise, and is precisely the overstatement the law does not require. Read compliance stems for the operative words — “required to,” “according to,” “legally justified in” — and answer from the standard, not the aspiration.

Proof: SDL Part Two item 6, objective 0008. Key: FAPE means providing “an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that is tailored to meet the student’s unique needs.” Rationale: the IEP “is a legal document that specifies the supports, modifications, and services that the student is entitled to receive” in the least restrictive environment. Missouri item 8 shows the same discipline on speech: asked by a board member to suppress a student newspaper article, the superintendent is legally justified only if it “poses a substantial risk of disrupting learning in the school.”

Kills: the **unearned promise** (“enables the student to achieve to his or her maximum potential”); the **invented standard** (“services that match or surpass a federally mandated array of services” — no such array exists); and, from Missouri, the community-offence and quality-of-argument standards, which are not legal tests at all.

Two currency warnings. The SDL guide dates from 2009–2010, and the fourth FAPE option — services of “at least minimal educational benefit” — reflects the older Rowley-era floor. The keyed answer is still right, but the governing federal standard today comes from *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District RE-1* (2017): an IEP must be reasonably calculated to enable progress appropriate in light of the child’s circumstances. And Illinois Field 225 items 19 and 20 show *how* a Pearson legal item is built — the statute’s exact classification scheme decides it — but their content is Illinois School Code and reduction-in-force rules that **do not transfer to New York**.

Distractor taxonomy

The recurring shapes of a wrong answer. Name the shape and you can drop the option in two seconds. Every row is drawn from an option that actually appears in one of the official items cited above.

Name	What it is	The tell
Premature output	A plan, letter, campaign or funding request produced before anyone has been consulted or anything diagnosed.	Disseminate, announce, submit, initiate — in a stem containing “before,” “first” or “to begin.”
One-building fix	Solves the problem at the school where it surfaced, leaving the district without a standard.	A single school, principal or department named in a district-level stem.
Incident fix	Corrects the person who erred instead of the system that permitted the error.	Singular subject plus a corrective verb.
Compliance bolt-on	A new rule, deadline, mandate or evaluation criterion where the real gap is skill.	“Require all,” “mandate,” “specify a date by which,” “revise the criteria to include.”
Board faction	Works individual members, the president, or the friendly bloc rather than the body.	“Selected board members,” “members who agreed with him.”
Board takeover	Hands the board an administrative decision, or asks it to approve something not yet scoped.	A request for authorisation before any assessment step.
End-run	Reaches past the person whose job it is — the teacher instead of the principal, staff instead of the leader.	An individual contacted out of sequence; the district redoing the building’s work.
Unearned promise	Guarantees an outcome, a maximum, or a benefit level nobody can commit to.	“Maximum potential,” “will significantly improve,” “guarantee that they will hire.”
Popularity test	Selects or rejects a course of action on whether staff will like it.	“Likely to be inclined to support,” “workload will be relatively light.”
Borrowed proof	Points at another district’s results instead of this district’s causes.	“Has this worked well in other districts,” “data from comparable districts.”
Tone fix	Adjusts warmth or packaging when the barrier is comprehension or access.	“A friendlier, more welcoming introductory sentence.”
Single channel	One communication route treated as sufficient for the whole audience.	Post it, mail it, send it — with no second route named.
Morale substitute	Praise, inspiration or a seminar in place of removing the actual burden.	“Expressing gratitude,” “renew their commitment,” “seminars on empowerment.”
Efficiency trap	The leader analyses and decides alone because it is faster and cleaner.	“The leader analyzes the results, then introduces appropriate changes.”
Narrow slice	Fixes one item on a multi-part list the stem gave you and ignores the rest.	Matches one clause of a stem that named four or five problems.
Lowered bar	Adjusts standards, goals or expectations down to current performance.	“More realistic goal,” “procedures for modifying the standards.”
Wrong record	Real documentation — for a different decision than the one being made.	Student outcomes offered as proof of teacher performance.
Premature judgment	Concludes from one year, one source, or one measurement.	“For the first time,” “last year,” “a recent assessment.”
Plausible second	A genuinely good action that is simply not first, not most important, or not best for the stated goal.	You can defend it — but not over the key, once you re-read the qualifier.

Roughly two-thirds of official SDL distractors fall into one of the first eight rows. The last row is the one that costs experienced administrators points, because experience makes it easier to justify.

Qualifier discipline

Every SDL stem carries a qualifier, and it is doing more work than the scenario. When two options both look right, you have almost always stopped reading the qualifier too early.

Qualifier	What it ranks	Worked example from an official item
first	Sequence, not importance. Several options may all happen eventually; only one happens now.	SDL Part Two item 5: identify each building's specific needs <i>before</i> requesting fiscal support. The funding request is not wrong — it is third.
most important	Consequence if omitted. Which option, if skipped, breaks everything downstream?	SDL Part Two item 3: without documented remediation the termination is legally exposed. Student records and discipline history are nice to have; this one is load-bearing.
best / most effective	Fit to the goal <i>named in the stem</i> , which is usually narrower than the scenario.	SDL Part One item 9: the stated goal is reinforcing a culture of accountability. Media outreach and an implementation deadline are fine district actions that do not build that culture.
most appropriate	Fit to role and to the moment. Often a jurisdiction test in disguise.	SDL Part Two item 7: appropriate for a superintendent who has already listened is designing solutions with stakeholders, not launching a family-facing campaign.
most likely to	Mechanism, not aspiration. Which option contains the causal step?	SDL Part Two item 1: assessment used as an integral tool for ongoing instructional decisions is <i>how</i> classroom assessment improves learning. Mandated testing dates and districtwide grading are governance.
most important...first	Stacked. Eliminate on importance, then order what survives.	SDL Part One item 8: four legitimate programme-selection questions; only one is both essential and prior — does this address the causes?
most...if an important goal is to	Conditional. The stem's clause is the key; you are matching, not judging.	SDL Part One item 7: you are not asked whether interviews beat questionnaires. You are asked what interviews are for.
most concerned about	Inverted. Pick the worst thing, not the best thing.	Indiana item 5: of four imperfect principal behaviours, minimal time monitoring and giving feedback on teaching is the one that matters most.
required to / legally justified in	Nothing — a knowledge item wearing a scenario. Patterns are off.	SDL Part Two item 6 (FAPE); Missouri item 8 (student press). Answer from the standard.
except / would not	Inverted set membership. Three options belong to a family; find the outlier.	Rare in the official SDL set, common in practice banks. Mark the stem before reading options or you will key the family.

DOWN TO TWO?

Name what the qualifier ranks, then re-read the stem's last clause — the goal statement — and ask which option serves *that* goal rather than the scenario generally. Check the tense: has the stem already done what one option proposes? Then ask which option the actor actually controls.

The 60-second elimination checklist

Run in this order under time pressure. Aim to be at two options within twenty seconds and committed within sixty. Most SDL items collapse by step 6.

Ten questions, in order

- **1. What is the qualifier, and what is the goal clause?** Mark both before you read a single option. Half of all two-option ties are decided here.
- **2. Who is acting?** Superintendent, district leader, assistant superintendent, director, board, team? Delete every option that is somebody else's move — especially the principal's.
- **3. District problem or building problem?** If the stem is districtwide, delete every option that fixes one school, one principal, or one incident.
- **4. Where in the sequence does the stem place me?** If the leader has already reviewed data and spoken with people, delete the remaining information-gathering options. If it says "before" or "to begin," delete everything that produces an output.
- **5. Does any option mandate, require, deadline, or add an evaluation criterion?** If the underlying gap is skill or understanding, delete it.
- **6. Does any option go around the person whose job it is?** Around the principal, around the board as a body, around the team that generated the data. Delete.
- **7. Does any option promise, guarantee, maximise, or assert a fact the stem never gave me?** Delete.
- **8. Does any option lower a standard, narrow a goal, or substitute morale for relief?** Delete.
- **9. Of what survives, which one do the stem's own words point at?** Official rationales quote the stem constantly, and the key usually reuses the stem's nouns.
- **10. Commit.** There is no penalty for a wrong answer on the selected-response section, so never leave an item blank — and do not spend a third minute on any single item. The written assignments carry half your score and they are what runs out of time.

THE TIEBREAKER SENTENCE

If two options survive all ten questions, choose the one that is **districtwide, builds capacity rather than adding compliance, involves the people the decision lands on, and uses a lever the superintendent actually controls**. That combination is the SDL's house style, and it is visible in the key of the large majority of the eighteen official sample items.

The same discipline, applied to the written assignments

The selected-response patterns are not a separate skill from the constructed-response ones — the sample strong responses are made of them. Three things carry across, one per SDL scoring criterion: **PURPOSE** (fulfil 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).

- ✓ **Answer every bullet of the charge, in the charge's order.** Both published evaluations begin by walking the charge bullet by bullet. A brilliant response that skips a bullet is a partial-command response. This is PURPOSE, and it is the cheapest criterion to secure.
- ✓ **Every claim gets a document, a number, or a named mechanism.** The Educational Program Analysis strong response tags evidence inline — "(Documents #1 and #3)," "approximately half of the middle school staff have five or fewer years of experience (Document #4)," "consistent low performance (i.e., 71–78% passing) over a three-year period (Document #2)."
- ✓ **Describe your own role as a superintendent's role.** The Work Product strong response says: "As chairperson, I will facilitate the problem-solving process, promote consensus, and present the plan to our school board and local

community. I will listen to and ensure the incorporation of ideas of immigrant families, and I will identify and provide resources.” Facilitate, convene, resource, present to the board, monitor. Not: write the plan, teach the lesson, run the school.

- ✓ **Say why the strategy will work.** Every SDL charge contains an “explain why” clause, and the evaluations quote the reasoning back. A strategy without a mechanism is an assertion.

One structural point that is easy to get backwards: on **both** parts, Assignment One is the short task (150–300 words, about 17% of the total score) and Assignment Two is the long task (300–600 words, about 33%). On Part One that is Work Product then Case Study. On Part Two it is Management Problem Solving then Educational Program Analysis — so on 104 the *short* task comes from Subarea II and the *long* task from Subarea I.

How SDL patterns differ from SBL patterns

For candidates who prepared for the building-leader exam first. Most of what you learned still applies. The parts that do not will cost you points, because they are the parts that feel most like competence.

Carries over unchanged

- ✓ Diagnose before you act; the first move is almost always information or consultation.
- ✓ Build capacity rather than mandating practice.
- ✓ Involve the people the decision lands on.
- ✓ Never lower expectations to match current performance.
- ✓ Cite the documents; do not conclude beyond what the exhibits support.
- ✓ Qualifier discipline — “first,” “most important,” “best” behave identically on both exams.

Changes, and will cost you points

- ✗ The unit of analysis moves from the school to the district.
- ✗ You supervise principals, not teachers.
- ✗ The governing body exists, and it is not a stakeholder group.
- ✗ Budget, facilities, procurement, grants and compliance are yours.
- ✗ The evidence base is thinner, older, and has no social-justice competency.
- ✗ The written-assignment scoring criteria are different words entirely.

Dimension	Building-leader exam	SDL
Unit of analysis	The school. The right answer usually acts inside one building, with one faculty.	The district. A building-specific action is frequently the <i>distractor</i> — the Part One Case Study’s central criticism of the superintendent is that she focused “primarily on individual building-level policies” and targeted one building instead of establishing districtwide policy.
Who you supervise	Teachers, directly. You observe, coach, evaluate, and build the improvement plan.	Principals. You verify that <i>they</i> observed, coached, documented and remediated. Part Two item 3 keys on receiving the building leader’s remediation documentation — not on gathering your own evidence about the teacher.
Governance	Largely absent. Central office appears as an authority to consult before structural change.	Central. Part One objective 0001 covers the board of education, the structure and governance of public schooling, BOCES, and state and federal law. You implement the board’s decisions even when you argued against them, brief the whole board equally, and never take sides in a board dispute.
Money and operations	Mostly someone else’s problem; you consult central office.	Yours. Part Two Subarea II is district operational management, financial and facilities management, and mandate compliance — capital planning, grant oversight, procurement, records, and budget presentation to a board and a community.
Equity vocabulary	An explicit social-justice competency, with items that reward naming institutional bias.	No such competency exists in the 2008 SDL framework. Equity appears as consistency across schools, access to communication, subgroup performance and FAPE. Use the district’s language — <i>all schools, all families, consistently</i> .
Written scoring	Its own criteria, with its own wording.	PURPOSE · APPLICATION OF CONTENT · SUPPORT, on a four-point scale (4 thorough command, 3 general, 2 partial, 1 little or none), plus unscorable and blank. Do not carry SBL’s criteria across.
Standards and evidence	Written against a modern standards set, with a refreshed and comparatively large official item pool.	The SDL Test Design and Assessment Framework is © 2008 NYSED and cites no external standards set — not PSEL, not ISLLC. NYSED separately publishes the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, NYS Version (Regents-adopted 2017), current NY practice vocabulary but not what this exam is built from. Study the sixteen objectives — and learn the <i>shape</i> of the reasoning, because eighteen sample items is not enough material to learn keys.

THE ONE-SENTENCE VERSION

On the building-leader exam you are asked what a good principal does. On the SDL you are asked what a superintendent does *that a principal cannot* — set the districtwide standard, resource it, supervise the people who implement it, keep the board informed without handing it the administration, and build the system that makes the next incident less likely.

HONEST LIMITS OF THIS PAGE

Eighteen official items cannot establish a pattern by themselves; where a pattern rests on a single SDL item, the evidence block says so. The framework is © 2008 and the guides © 2009–2010, so content that has moved since — the *Endrew F.* FAPE standard is the clearest case — has moved without the guide being updated. Out-of-state items are cited for reasoning architecture, never for statutory substance. Practitioner material is labelled at the point of use; the NY practice bank it comes from has documented defects (several school-law items carry wrong keys and off-topic rationales, and one states an outdated three-year probationary period where New York’s is four years for appointments on or after 1 July 2015), and none of those defective items is cited anywhere on this page. A pattern is a prior, not a proof.

PART III

High-Yield Cheatsheet

Every objective on both parts distilled to what it actually tests, the New York vocabulary and structures the exam assumes you already know, the numbers worth memorising, and the shift in thinking that separates a district answer from a building answer.

WHAT THIS PAGE IS BUILT FROM

The objective blocks below are the **2008 SDL assessment framework**, compressed. That framework and the test design are the only official statements of what 103 and 104 measure, and the framework cites **no external standards set** — not PSEL, not ISLLC. NYSED separately publishes the *Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL)*, *NYS Version*, Regents-adopted in **2017**; that is the vocabulary of current New York practice and of your preparation program, but it is not what this test is written from, and no official crosswalk exists. Speak PSEL in your district; write the framework on the test.

Blueprint at a glance

Two tests, scored separately. Each is a 60-item multiple-choice section plus two written assignments — and the two sections are worth exactly the same.

60

MC items per part

2

Written assignments per part

50 / 50

MC share / written share — on both parts

220

Passing scaled score, each part

16

Objectives (8 per part)

4

Subareas (2 per part)

4 hrs

Testing time per part, +15 min tutorial & NDA

17 / 33

Weight: short task / long task

THE MOST MISREAD FACT ABOUT THIS EXAM

The multiple-choice section is 50% of your score and the two written assignments are the other 50% — on Part One and Part Two alike. Two essays weigh as much as sixty items. One long task is worth **33%** of a whole test by itself, about what all thirty MC items in an entire subarea are worth. Drilling content and never rehearsing a timed 300–600-word response is studying half the test.

Part	Subarea	Objectives	MC	MC %	Written assignment	Written %
One (103)	I. Developing, Communicating, and Sustaining an Educational Vision	0001–0004	30	25%	Assignment One — Work Product , 150–300 words	17%
	II. Supervising Districtwide Change and Accountability	0005–0008	30	25%	Assignment Two — Case Study , 300–600 words	33%
	Total	0001–0008	60	50%	2	50%
Two (104)	I. Leading the District Educational Program	0001–0005	37	31%	Assignment Two — Educational Program Analysis , 300–600 words	33%
	II. Managing District Resources and Compliance	0006–0008	23	19%	Assignment One — Management Problem Solving , 150–300 words	17%
	Total	0001–0008	60	50%	2	50%

Source: NYSED / Evaluation Systems, *School District Leader Test Design and Assessment Framework* (© 2008) and *School District Leader Preparation Guide* (© 2010). Counts and percentages are the framework's own "approximate" figures. The MC section includes some non-scorable field-test items; every scorable item counts the same.

THE ASYMMETRY THAT TRIPS PEOPLE UP ON 104

On both parts, Assignment One is short (150–300 words, 17%) and Assignment Two is long (300–600 words, 33%). On 103 that maps intuitively: short task from Subarea I, long task from Subarea II. **On 104 it inverts.** The long 33% task (*Educational Program Analysis*) comes from **Subarea I — Leading the District Educational Program**; the short 17% task (*Management Problem Solving*) comes from **Subarea II — Managing District Resources and Compliance**. So on Part Two, Subarea I carries 31% of the MC and the 33% essay — about two-thirds of the test. Finance, facilities and compliance total 36%.

ORDER AND PACING

- You may write the two assignments **in either order** and return to either as time permits; both can be flagged for review like MC items.
- Four hours covers the whole part — 60 items and both essays. There is no separate essay clock.
- Both parts in one appointment runs **8 hrs 40 min**, including a 40-minute lunch.

REGISTRATION FACTS THAT SHAPE YOUR PLAN

- ✓ Offered **by appointment during testing windows only** — and the SDL windows are **not** the SBL windows.
- ✓ Fees: Part One **\$169** · Part Two **\$168** · both **\$337**.
- ✓ Retake wait **30 days** · registration valid **one year** · free reschedule up to **24 hours** before · scores post at **10:00 p.m.**

Part One · Test 103 – the eight objectives

Subarea I (0001–0004): vision, communication, collaboration. Subarea II (0005–0008): change, planning, data, accountability. Titles are the framework's; bullets are what it says generates items.

0001

Leadership concepts and principles and their application

Subarea I · the NY governance objective

Leadership theory and practice, plus the professional and political environment of district leadership in New York State.

- Key **theories of leadership**, the research supporting them, and best-practice applications
- Applying leadership principles to **design and execute districtwide systems** that raise achievement — leadership as system-building, not personal style
- The **role of the board of education** and the structure and governance of public schooling in New York
- The **functions of BOCES** — the only place in either framework where BOCES is named outright
- **State and federal law, regulation and judicial decisions** affecting district management
- The **NYS Code of Ethics for Educators** and the role of values and ethics in district leadership
- **Interpersonal and communication skills** as leadership competencies

0002

Developing and implementing a shared, sustainable educational vision

Subarea I

How a district vision gets built, aligned, resourced, communicated and revisited.

- **Engaging building leaders and other stakeholders** in developing the vision
- What makes a vision **sound and sustainable** — focused on students meeting state learning standards
- **Aligning it with board policies and goals** and with the instructional program
- **Aligning district and school visions**, supporting mutually supportive vision statements at every school
- Relating the vision to the **political, economic, social and cultural** context of community, state and nation
- Promoting it among constituencies, including **securing the financial and human resources** to realize it
- Using the vision as a **benchmark** for analyzing needs and accomplishments
- Continually **evaluating, refocusing** and clearing obstacles in specific content areas

0003

Principles and practices of clear and effective communication

Subarea I

Communicating with every audience a district leader faces — routinely and in a crisis.

- **Ongoing dialogue** with building leaders, board members, community, families, students and staff about core values, goals, policies, practices and achievements
- **Communicating regularly with board members** — a recurring item stem
- Reaching **diverse audiences through multiple modes**: individual and group meetings, activities, media releases, formal presentations
- Articulating the vision in terms of **learning outcomes, core values, shared norms and research**
- Communicating **assessment results** to families and stakeholders
- Reporting goals and results accurately — **addressing setbacks as well as advances**
- **Community and public relations**; technology; effective writing, speaking and listening
- Communicating **in crises** and other heightened emotional environments

0004

Processes of collaboration and cooperation

Subarea I

Working with people inside the district and with the groups beyond it whose support the district needs.

- Collaborating with the **board, building leaders, staff, families, students and community** to set and implement goals
- Working with key external groups: **employees' organizations, businesses, legislators, SED, higher education, the media**
- Building **ongoing partnerships** with community agencies and institutions of higher education
- Working with **diverse community groups**; creating respect and trust; using diverse perspectives to achieve the vision
- **Conflict-resolution and consensus-building** techniques in varied contexts
- Planning with **colleges** for prospective-educator experiences that benefit both the candidates and district students
- Behaviors that affirm **integrity and ethics in all interpersonal contact**

0005

The process of change and its management

Subarea II · source of the Case Study

Initiating, supporting, monitoring and sustaining change in an educational environment.

- Concepts and applications of the change process — the **change agent's role**, building consensus, overcoming obstacles
- **Making the case for change**: eliciting input, identifying needs, clarifying goals, focusing on outcomes
- Supporting **schools' own initiatives** and empowering constituents to drive improvement
- Initiating change with building leaders and board members, **anticipating resistance**, establishing context
- **Monitoring change and making adjustments** to reach goals
- Analyzing **community culture and power structures**, formal and informal, and enlisting support

0006

Comprehensive, long-range planning and implementation

Subarea II

Multi-year planning at district and school level — including planning for your own succession.

- **Data-driven long-range planning** aligned to core values, goals and mission
- Factors in comprehensive planning, including **involving all key stakeholders**
- The **district leader's own role** — convener and sponsor, not sole author
- Initiating, leading, implementing and **sustaining** planning at school and district level, informed by **multiple data sources** and technology
- **Succession planning**: identifying, recruiting, developing, mentoring, retaining, promoting and coaching potential leaders to expand capacity and sustain the vision

0007

Data-driven decision-making and problem-solving skills and procedures

Subarea II

How decisions get made: data, logic, collaboration — and calculated risk.

- Procedures for decision making: **clarifying issues, identifying goals, analyzing options**
- Gathering, analyzing and using **data from a variety of sources** — the framework insists on more than one
- **Risk taking and its appropriate use**: assessing risk continuously, adjusting course quickly, and taking a **principled risk even without unanimous support**
- **Critical thinking**: using logic and evidence, questioning assumptions, evaluating preconceptions, distinguishing beliefs from provable statements
- Promoting **collaborative** decision making — valuing diverse views, negotiation skills
- Developing **consensus** and facilitating creative problem solving

0008

How to promote accountability

Subarea II

Accountability for the system, for its schools, and for yourself.

- The **importance and implications** of accountability in a public system
- Methods for **assessing educational quality and progress** and enforcing accountability
- The **role of testing**, and using testing data to evaluate instructional effectiveness and drive improvement
- Establishing **school and district monitoring and accountability systems** tied to stated goals
- Building a **culture of accountability** rather than a compliance ritual
- **Reporting district progress** toward learning goals and **accepting responsibility for outcomes**

Part Two · Test 104 — the eight objectives

Subarea I (0001–0005) is the educational program: learning, standards, students, staff, professional development — 31% of the MC plus the 33% essay. Subarea II (0006–0008) is operations, finance, facilities and compliance.

0001

Understand and support learning throughout the district

Subarea I · source of the 33% essay

Curriculum, instruction and assessment seen from above the building.

- **Developmental and learning theories**, curriculum development, instructional delivery and classroom practice, applied to the **diverse needs of all students** — students with disabilities, English language learners, gifted and talented
- **Sound assessment practices** planned and implemented to support schools and their staff
- Implications of **student differences** — cultural background, home language, disability, family characteristics, learning style
- Practices that sustain a district culture of **learning and growth** and of **equity and diversity**
- **Instructional technology**, and working with building leaders and teachers to integrate it into instruction and assessment
- Providing schools with **resources, flexibility, structures and policies** that make the goals reachable

0002

Establishing and promoting standards and expectations

Subarea I

Setting explicit expectations for students, staff and leaders — and modeling them.

- Communicating **high standards and expectations for oneself, staff and students**
- The role of **explicit standards for students, teachers and school leaders** in achieving shared goals
- A district and school culture that promotes **excellence and supports informed, responsible risk taking**
- **Clearly defining roles and responsibilities** of district and school staff — who decides what, in writing
- Embodying and promoting **ethical conduct, high expectations and a strong work ethic**

0003

Effective methods for providing support to students

Subarea I

Resources, safety, services, and the outside agencies that supply them.

- Identifying, securing and **leveraging internal and external resources** for student learning and activities
- Allocating resources to schools **equitably** in ways that address diverse student needs
- A **safe, secure, healthy and supportive** environment that is age-appropriate and developmentally sound
- Learning what students need through **background research, incisive questioning and perceptive analysis**
- Support services for **students with disabilities, English language learners and at-risk populations**
- Collaborative relationships with **social service and health service providers**
- **Warning signs of violence**, prevention, intervention, and **consulting police and emergency services**

0004

Support to building leaders, teachers and other staff

Subarea I · you supervise principals

Supervising, developing and sustaining the adults — principals first.

- Encouraging **leadership, creativity, innovation, action research, responsible risk taking, stress management, collaboration, trust and mutual respect**
- Effective **induction and retention plans** for staff
- **Diagnosing staff needs** and implementing strategies with ongoing support
- **Supervisory models** — developmental, clinical, coaching — used to monitor and improve performance
- Developing capability through **supervision and evaluation of teachers and building leaders**, effective assignment, and systems of mentoring
- **Delegating authority without abrogating responsibility** — the framework's own phrasing, and a reliable distractor test
- Professional support focused on **authentic problems and student outcomes**

0005

Fostering ongoing staff development and sustaining personal professional growth

Subarea I

Professional learning as a system — and your own continued growth as part of it.

- Integrating **continuous learning** into the work: collaborating with staff, identifying needs, setting goals, implementing PD plans, and engaging staff in **formal and informal self-assessment**
- Effective and **equitable personnel processes** — recruiting, selecting, inducting, assigning, **terminating**, advancing and **awarding tenure** — to retain a highly qualified, diverse staff
- **Adult learning principles and motivation theory** applied to PD design
- Allocating **adequate time, funding and resources** so PD plans are actually implemented
- **Technology and other resources** supporting learning and PD across the organization
- A **personal plan for self-improvement**, using listening and reflection; managing stress
- **Time management** procedures, including technology to enhance efficiency

0006

District-level operational management

Subarea II · source of the 17% essay

Organizations, people, contracts, data and resource alignment.

- Major **theories and research from education and other disciplines** on managing organizations and people
- **Group dynamics, team building, process skills, systems theory, and formal and informal power structures**
- **Supervision and direction of school-level management** and other district staff — i.e., supervising principals
- **Collective bargaining and contract management** that support and extend the educational vision
- Using **data and technology to monitor and evaluate school and district management** and catch issues early
- Assessing **effectiveness in meeting goals** and reaching out to the broader community
- **Aligning resources** and making resource decisions from mission, goals and priorities

0007

District financial and facilities management

Subarea II

Budget development, revenue, financial reporting, emergency management and physical plant.

- **Political, economic and social factors** affecting district financial planning
- **Budget planning and management**, and **working with stakeholders to establish the district budget**
- Managing finances and facilities so they **support educational goals**, not merely balance
- Building capacity by **securing and creatively allocating resources** and planning for additional ones
- **Public school financing at federal, state and local levels** — tax revenues, other sources, and **restrictions on the uses of funds**
- Communicating with the board and **reporting financial information to varied audiences**
- **Emergency management and crisis response**
- Keeping the **physical plant, equipment and support systems** operating safely and efficiently

0008

Supervising compliance with federal, state and local mandates

Subarea II

Knowing the law well enough to build compliant policy — and to keep the district out of court.

- Laws and regulations governing **district and building management, human resources, student rights, and parent/guardian rights**
- **Education case law** and its relevance to district and building management
- Communicating with **local, state and federal representatives**
- Applying statutes and regulations, **developing policy in accordance with law**, and **limiting the district's vulnerability to legal action**
- **Federal, state and local reporting requirements**
- **Student safety and welfare**, including New York requirements for **identifying and reporting suspected child abuse and maltreatment**

The district-level shift

Most SDL candidates come from a principalship, and the most common way to lose points is to answer a district question with a building answer. Every item asks what the *superintendent* does — and the superintendent builds systems rather than fixing the case in front of them.

Dimension	Building leader thinking	District leader thinking — what the test rewards
Who you supervise	Teachers, aides, building staff. You observe classrooms.	Principals. You supervise, support and evaluate <i>building leaders</i> and hold them accountable for their buildings. You rarely appear in a classroom in a correct answer.
“Instructional leadership”	Observation cycles, feedback, coaching individual teachers, one school’s data.	Coherence across schools. Aligned K–12 curriculum, common assessment practice, one PD architecture, comparable opportunity in every building. You fix the <i>system</i> that produced the classroom problem.
Whose authority	District policy and the superintendent’s direction; a building budget you administer.	Board of education policy. You recommend; the board adopts. You cannot commit the district beyond what policy authorizes, and you report to the board as a <i>body</i> — never to individual members privately on district business.
Scope of data	One school’s results and subgroups.	Districtwide data systems — comparing schools, spotting building-to-building variation, disaggregating across the system, reporting publicly.
Resources	Advocating for your building’s share.	Allocating equitably across schools per the district’s vision and priorities — which sometimes means your former building gets less.
Time horizon	This year’s plan, this year’s cohort.	Multi-year. The framework’s words: patient and persistent, a long and broad view, building a system that will <i>endure</i> , with succession planning built in.
External relations	Your school community.	The board, the voters, employee organizations, BOCES, SED, legislators, media, higher education, health and social agencies — and the taxpayers who vote your budget.
First move	Address the incident.	Diagnose, convene, systematize. Data from more than one source, then the stakeholders who must live with the decision, then the policy or structure that prevents recurrence.

YOU OWN THESE; A PRINCIPAL DOES NOT

- ✗ **Budget development and the annual vote** — you build the proposed budget with the board and business official, present it publicly, and it goes to the voters.
- ✗ **Districtwide contracts and procurement** — bidding, purchasing policy, transportation, food service, technology.
- ✗ **The BOCES relationship** — which services the district buys through a CoSer, what stays in-house, and the aid consequences of that choice.
- ✗ **Negotiations** with employee organizations — you or your designee sit at the table, the board ratifies, and Triborough shapes every calculation.
- ✗ **Districtwide data and student information systems**, and the state reporting built on them.
- ✗ **Personnel recommendations only you can make** — tenure recommendations to the board, probationary appointments and discontinuances, and the recommendation to prefer §3020-a charges.
- ✗ **Board relations** — agendas, policy development, executive session practice, board goal setting.
- ✗ **Districtwide compliance** — state and federal reporting, ESSA designations, Title I fiscal rules, special education capacity, safety plans.

ANSWER-SHAPE TELLS ON DISTRICT ITEMS

- An option where the superintendent personally does a principal’s task is nearly always wrong — **except** when the item tests delegation, where the right answer delegates *authority* and retains *responsibility*.
- An option that bypasses the board on policy, money or personnel is wrong.

- An option acting on a single data source, or on one complaint, is wrong. The framework says “**a variety of sources.**”
- An option solving it for one school when the stem shows the problem in several is wrong.
- An option that imposes before eliciting input is usually wrong — but so is one that studies forever. The framework endorses **principled risk without unanimous support.**
- An option treating a legal or contractual obligation as negotiable is wrong.

ONE SENTENCE TO CARRY INTO EVERY ITEM

The superintendent works through people and structures. If an answer choice does not touch a person you supervise, a policy the board adopts, a resource you allocate or a system you monitor, it is probably not the superintendent’s move.

New York vocabulary and structures the exam assumes

103 objective 0001 and 104 objective 0008 both require the New York governance, finance and legal environment, and item stems are written inside it. Verified against New York law and NYSED practice as of August 2026; reconfirm anything decision-critical before relying on it professionally.

Board of education The governing body. It acts *only as a body in a properly convened meeting* — an individual member has no authority to direct staff. It adopts policy, hires and evaluates the superintendent, adopts the budget for submission to voters, and votes appointments and tenure.

Policy vs. administration The line the exam keeps testing. The board sets *what* and *why* through policy; the superintendent decides *how* and executes. A board member intervening in a personnel or operational matter is a governance problem, and the fix routes it back through policy and the board as a body.

Superintendent of schools The district’s chief executive and chief instructional officer, appointed by and serving at the pleasure of the board under a multi-year employment contract. There is **no tenure** in the superintendency.

District superintendent A different office: chief executive of a **BOCES** who *also* serves as the Commissioner’s field representative for that supervisory district. “District superintendent” in an item means BOCES, not your local superintendent.

BOCES Boards of Cooperative Educational Services — regional entities letting component districts share what they cannot efficiently run alone: special education, CTE, alternative education, instructional and administrative support. Districts buy services, share costs, and earn **BOCES aid** on qualifying prior-year BOCES expenditures — so “in-house or through BOCES” is an aid question too.

CoSer & cross-contracting A **CoSer** (cooperative service) is the specific shared service a district contracts for through its BOCES, with its share charged back. **Cross-contracting** is buying a service from another BOCES, generally arranged through your own so the service stays properly aidable.

The “Big 5” New York City, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Yonkers — large city districts that are **fiscally dependent** on their municipalities. No annual budget vote, and not eligible for BOCES membership. If an item turns on a public budget vote, it is not a Big 5 district.

Annual budget vote In most districts the **third Tuesday in May** (fourth Tuesday only where the Commissioner authorizes it for a religious-observance conflict). A public budget hearing must be held **7–14 days before** the vote. Voters must be U.S. citizens, 18 or older, resident in the district 30 days.

Contingency budget After a defeat the board may resubmit once or go straight to contingency; after a **second defeat** contingency is mandatory. Under the tax cap law the **levy may not exceed the prior year’s — zero growth**, the administrative component is capped against the prior year or last defeated budget, and certain expenditures become impermissible.

Property tax levy limit (“the 2% cap”) Chapter 97 of the Laws of 2011. It caps growth in the **tax levy** — not the rate, not spending — at the **lesser of 2% or CPI**, then applies a statutory formula with a tax base growth factor, PILOT adjustments and **exclusions** (certain voter-approved capital costs, large court judgments, pension growth above a

statutory trigger). Piercing the limit takes a **60% supermajority** of votes cast; the calculation is filed with the State Comptroller first.

State aid The largest revenue stream in most districts, delivered through many categories on statutory formulas — general operating aid plus expense-driven aids for transportation, building, BOCES and special education. Formula-driven, lagged, and dependent on accurate reporting: bad data reporting is a revenue problem.

Foundation Aid New York's principal general operating aid formula, enacted 2007 after the *Campaign for Fiscal Equity* litigation: the cost of an adequate education, adjusted for regional cost and pupil need, less an expected local contribution based on district wealth. Phase-in to full funding completed in the **2023–24** state budget; the formula's inputs have been under review since, so treat dollar figures as year-specific.

Reserve funds Purpose-restricted funds a district may legally save in: **capital** (voter authorization to establish and to expend), repair, tax certiorari, unemployment insurance, workers' compensation, employee benefit accrued liability, retirement contribution and insurance reserves. Money cannot move freely between them. Separately, unrestricted **unassigned fund balance is capped at 4%** of the ensuing year's budget.

Internal controls Segregation of duties, authorization, documentation, reconciliation and oversight. New York's post-Roslyn accountability legislation (2005) hard-wired much of it: an independent **claims auditor** appointed by the board, an **internal audit function**, an **audit committee**, an annual **external audit**, and fiscal-oversight training for new board members. You own the control environment even though the business official runs the mechanics.

Claims auditing Pre-payment review of every claim against the district for legality, accuracy and documentation. The claims auditor reports to the **board**, not the business office, and cannot be the person who authorizes or records the transaction. Any scenario where one person orders, receives, approves and pays is describing a control failure.

Open Meetings Law Public Officers Law Article 7. Board business happens in public, with notice. An **executive session** requires a motion made *in open session* naming the general subject area, carried by majority of the total membership, and is limited to enumerated grounds — collective negotiations, proposed or pending litigation, matters leading to the appointment, discipline or dismissal of a *particular person*, and that person's medical, financial or employment history. "Personnel" alone is **not** a valid reason, and public money may not be appropriated in executive session.

FOIL Freedom of Information Law, Public Officers Law Article 6. District records are presumptively public; the agency must respond within **five business days** — grant, deny, or acknowledge with an approximate date — and denials are appealed internally, then to court under Article 78. Withholding or redaction requires a statutory ground (personal privacy, inter-agency deliberative material, FERPA-protected records). "Ignore it" is never right.

NYS Code of Ethics for Educators Named directly in 103 objective 0001. Adopted by the Board of Regents in 2002: **six aspirational principles** covering each student's potential, challenging and supportive learning environments, the educator's own learning, collaboration with colleagues, collaboration with families and community while respecting confidentiality, and advancing the ethical foundation of the learning community. Aspiration, **not a disciplinary code** — distinct from conflict-of-interest law and from a district code of conduct.

APPR Annual Professional Performance Review — evaluation of classroom teachers and building principals, negotiated locally and approved by NYSED. **§3012–d** is the long-standing framework; the newer **NYS–STEPS (§3012–e)** system now coexists with it during a transition, with districts able to adopt earlier and adoption becoming mandatory by **June 30, 2032**. You are the evaluator of record for principals, and APPR is a mandatory subject of bargaining.

Tenure and probation For teachers and building principals appointed **on or after July 1, 2015**, probation is **four years** — changed from three. Tenure also requires effective or highly effective composite ratings in at least three of the four years and no ineffective rating in the final year. Tenure is granted by the **board upon the recommendation of the superintendent**; the board cannot grant it without that recommendation.

§3020–a The due-process route to discipline or dismiss a **tenured** teacher or administrator. Written charges are preferred, the board votes whether probable cause exists, and the employee may demand a hearing — typically suspended **with pay** pending outcome. An expedited track exists for cases built on consecutive ineffective ratings. You investigate and recommend; the board votes charges; the hearing officer sets the penalty.

Taylor Law Civil Service Law Article 14 (1967). Public employees may organize and bargain collectively; **strikes are prohibited** with statutory penalties; **PERB** administers the act and hears improper practice charges. Impasse runs mediation, then fact-finding with a public report, then legislative determination by the board. Unilateral change to a mandatory subject of bargaining is an improper practice.

TriboroughThe Taylor Law amendment continuing the terms of an **expired** agreement until a successor is reached — including salary **step increments**. This is why an expired contract still carries cost growth, why the union's urgency to settle is lower than yours, and why "let the contract lapse" is never a correct answer.

The superintendent in negotiationsYou are the board's chief negotiator or you designate one. You cost out every proposal against the levy limit and multi-year projections, brief the board in executive session under the collective-negotiations exemption, and **the board ratifies**. You do not settle on your own authority, and you do not negotiate with an individual employee around the contract.

CSE and CPSEThe **Committee on Special Education** (school-age) and **Committee on Preschool Special Education** (ages 3–5), appointed by the board; required membership includes the parent, general and special education teachers, a district representative qualified to supervise special education and knowledgeable about the general curriculum and district resources, and someone who can interpret evaluation results. District obligations: **child find**; arrangements for services within **60 school days** of consent to evaluate; **annual review** and **reevaluation every three years**; a full continuum in the **least restrictive environment**; and paying for out-of-district placement when the district cannot provide FAPE.

Special education due processNew York runs a **two-tier** system — impartial hearing officer, then appeal to a **State Review Officer**, then court. **Stay-put** holds the current placement during proceedings. In discipline, removal beyond ten school days triggers a **manifestation determination**; for weapons, drugs or serious bodily injury a district may use an interim alternative educational setting for up to **45 school days** regardless of manifestation.

§504Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act — a civil rights statute, not a funding program. Broader eligibility than IDEA: an impairment that **substantially limits a major life activity**, read expansively since the 2008 ADA Amendments Act. Districts provide FAPE through accommodations, designate a **504 coordinator**, keep grievance procedures, and fund it locally. A student ineligible under IDEA may still qualify under §504.

ESSA designationsNew York identifies **CSI** (lowest-performing Title I schools and high schools with very low graduation rates), **TSI** (a consistently underperforming subgroup) and **ATSI** (a subgroup performing at the level of the lowest-performing schools). Identified schools write a **SCEP**; a district with identified schools is a **Target District** and writes a **DCIP**. Identification runs on a multi-year cycle.

My Brother's KeeperNew York's state-funded initiative — the first of its kind in the country — supporting the achievement and well-being of boys and young men of color through competitive district grants, family and community engagement, and educator diversity work. A district-level equity lever.

CR–S FrameworkNYSED's **Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework**, built on four principles: a welcoming and affirming environment; high expectations and rigorous instruction; inclusive curriculum and assessment; and ongoing professional learning. The language NYSED expects a district equity plan to be written in.

DASAThe Dignity for All Students Act, effective July 1, 2012, prohibiting discrimination, harassment and bullying — including cyberbullying — on protected grounds including actual or perceived race, color, weight, national origin, ethnic group, religion, disability, sexual orientation, gender (including gender identity and expression) and sex. Every school designates a **Dignity Act Coordinator**; staff must report **orally within one school day, in writing within two**; districts investigate, respond, train staff and report incidents to the State.

McKinney–VentoFederal protections for students experiencing homelessness. Districts designate a **local homeless education liaison**, enroll students **immediately even without records, immunizations, proof of residency or guardianship**, offer a choice between school of origin and school of current location where feasible, provide transportation, and run a dispute process while the student stays enrolled.

Title I comparability & supplement-not-supplantTwo separate fiscal tests. **Comparability**: services funded by state and local dollars in Title I schools must be comparable to those in non-Title I schools — and provable. **Supplement, not supplant**: Title I funds add to rather than replace state and local resources; under ESSA the district shows a Title I-neutral methodology for distributing state and local funds instead of defending each expenditure. **Maintenance of effort** limits how far district spending may fall without an aid penalty.

Regents & Commissioner's RegulationsThe **Board of Regents** heads the University of the State of New York and sets education policy; members are elected by the Legislature. The **Commissioner** runs the State Education Department and issues the **Commissioner's Regulations** (Title 8 NYCRR) — Part 80 certification, Part 100 curriculum and graduation, Part 154 English language learners, Part 200 students with disabilities. They carry the force of law.

§310 appeals Education Law §310 — a person aggrieved by an action of a board of education or school officer may appeal to the **Commissioner of Education**, generally **within 30 days** of the act complained of. It is an administrative remedy decided on the papers; the decision is final unless challenged in court under Article 78. Related: §306 provides for removal of a school officer for willful violation or neglect of duty.

Reporting suspected child abuse Named explicitly in 104 objective 0008. School personnel are mandated reporters: report **immediately by telephone to the Statewide Central Register** on reasonable cause to suspect abuse or maltreatment, then file the written report with the local child protective service within 48 hours. The duty is individual and non-delegable — telling a supervisor does not discharge it, and district policy cannot require permission to call.

Numbers worth memorizing

Stable figures a district leader is expected to know. Items marked **APPROX** are approximations by nature or vary by district; anything budget-year-specific is deliberately excluded.

The exam itself

Number	What it is
220	Passing scaled score. Each part is scored and passed separately.
212 / 211	Certification exam waiver scores (within 0.5 SEM of passing): 212 on 103, 211 on 104. Also requires a 3.5+ overall GPA on a <i>conferred</i> bachelor's or master's and an active certification application.
60 + 2	Selected-response items and written assignments per part. Some MC items are non-scorable field-test items.
50% / 50%	MC share / written share, on both parts.
17% and 33%	Weight of Assignment One (short) and Assignment Two (long) on each part.
150–300 / 300–600	Word ranges, short and long written assignments.
4 hours	Testing time per part, plus 15 minutes for the CBT tutorial and nondisclosure agreement.
8 hrs 40 min	Total appointment for both parts in one day, including a 40-minute lunch.
\$169 / \$168 / \$337	Part One / Part Two / both parts.
30 days	Wait before retaking a failed part — though in practice the window calendar controls, since SDL is offered only by appointment inside windows.
1 year / 24 hours	Registration validity; deadline to reschedule without a fee.
10:00 p.m.	When scores post online on your window's score report date.
4 to 1	The written score scale, plus unscorable and blank.

Running a New York district

Number	What it governs
Third Tuesday in May	Annual budget vote and board election in most districts (fourth Tuesday only by Commissioner authorization for a religious-observance conflict). Not applicable to the fiscally dependent Big 5.
7–14 days	Window before the vote in which the public budget hearing must be held.
18 / 30 days	Voter qualification: U.S. citizen, at least 18, resident of the district at least 30 days.
Lesser of 2% or CPI	Core of the tax levy limit (Ch. 97, L. 2011) before the formula, growth factor and exclusions. It caps the levy , not the rate and not spending.
60%	Supermajority of votes cast needed to adopt a budget that pierces the levy limit.
0%	Permitted levy growth under a contingency budget.
2	Maximum times a budget may go to the voters. A second defeat forces contingency.
4%	Cap on unrestricted unassigned fund balance as a percentage of the ensuing year's budget.
4 years	Probation for teachers and building principals appointed on or after July 1, 2015 — changed from three. Tenure also requires effective/highly effective ratings in 3 of the 4 years and no ineffective rating in the final year.
June 30, 2032	Deadline for districts to have adopted the NYS–STEPS evaluation system (§3012–e); §3012–d remains available until then.
5 business days	FOIL response deadline — grant, deny, or acknowledge with an approximate date.
30 days	Deadline to bring a §310 appeal to the Commissioner.
1 / 2 school days	DASA reporting of a material incident: oral report, then written report.
48 hours	Written follow-up after the immediate telephone report of suspected child abuse to the Statewide Central Register.
60 school days	New York's timeline for arranging special education programs and services after consent to an initial evaluation.
3 years	Maximum interval between special education reevaluations; IEPs are reviewed at least annually.
10 / 45 school days	Removal threshold triggering a manifestation determination; maximum interim alternative educational setting for weapons, drugs or serious bodily injury.
3 years CERT	Full-time teaching, pupil personnel service or educational leadership experience required for the SDL certificate.
Jan 1, 2031 CERT	Deadline to apply and meet all requirements for the Professional SDL certificate. No new SBL/SDL programs registered on or after 2/1/2025; existing programs discontinued on or after 9/1/2030. The exam survives the certificate — the Administrator certificate created by Regents action on January 13, 2025 requires passing <i>both</i> the SBL and SDL exams.
37 APPROX	BOCES statewide. Stable for years, but not a fixed statutory number — know the function, not the figure.

DELIBERATELY NOT ON THIS LIST

Current-year Foundation Aid totals, this year's CPI or tax cap growth factor, state aid ratios and per-pupil benchmarks. They change annually, the exam does not test them, and quoting a stale figure in a written response is worse than quoting none. Cite *mechanisms* — “the levy limit constrains the increase” — not numbers you cannot verify in the test center.

Written-assignment scoring, compressed

Four written tasks across the two parts, all scored on the same three criteria and the same four-point scale — and together they are half of everything.

READ THIS IF YOU ALSO STUDIED FOR THE SBL

SDL does not use the SBL criteria. SBL is scored on Completeness / Accuracy / Depth of Support and Understanding. SDL is PURPOSE / APPLICATION OF CONTENT / SUPPORT. They are not synonyms. The SDL passing scaled score is 220, not 520; the fees, testing windows and weights are different too. Do not carry any of it over.

CRITERION 1

PURPOSE

“Fulfill the charge of the assignment.” Arithmetic, not artistry. If the task asks for two issues, one strategy and an explanation, a response with one issue cannot fulfill the purpose however well written. **Count the bullets in the task and answer each in its own sentence.**

CRITERION 2

APPLICATION OF CONTENT

“Accurately and effectively apply the relevant knowledge and skills.” The knowledge is the framework’s — district-level leadership. This is where a building-leader answer loses points: accurate, but applied at the wrong altitude.

CRITERION 3

SUPPORT

“Support the response with appropriate examples and/or sound reasoning reflecting an understanding of the relevant knowledge and skills.” Every claim gets a **because**. On document-based tasks, support means **citing the specific evidence** in front of you.

Score	What the score point means, in one line
4	Thorough command — completely fulfills the purpose by responding fully to the task; accurate and <i>highly effective</i> application; strong support with high-quality, relevant examples and/or sound reasoning.
3	General command — generally fulfills the purpose by responding to the task; generally accurate and effective application; support with <i>some</i> relevant examples and/or generally sound reasoning.
2	Partial command — partially fulfills the purpose, responding in a <i>limited</i> way; limited, partially accurate and partially effective application; limited support with few examples and/or some flawed reasoning.
1	Little or no command — <i>fails</i> to fulfill the purpose; largely inaccurate and/or ineffective application; little or no support with seriously flawed reasoning.
U	Unscorable — unrelated to the assigned topic, unreadable, written in a language other than English, or lacking sufficient original work to score.
B	Blank — no response.

Score point language condensed from the official *School District Leader Preparation Guide* (© 2010 Pearson). Responses are evaluated on the criteria above, **not on writing ability** — but they must be clear enough to permit a valid judgment and conform to the conventions of edited American English.

Part	Task type	Drawn from	Words	Weight	The charge, in its usual shape
103	Work Product (Assignment One)	Subarea I — vision, communication, collaboration	150–300	17%	Often a memo to a named audience: why this matters now · two key issues and why each matters · your appropriate role as superintendent.
103	Case Study (Assignment Two)	Subarea II — change and accountability	300–600	33%	Citing specific examples: what the superintendent did well · what they did poorly or failed to do · three actions to resolve the situation and why each will be effective.
104	Management Problem Solving (Assignment One)	Subarea II — resources and compliance	150–300	17%	Two important issues to consider · one strategy · why that strategy is likely to be effective.
104	Educational Program Analysis (Assignment Two)	Subarea I — the district educational program	300–600	33%	Document-based, with several district documents behind tabs: one strength plus a strategy to build on it · two weaknesses · a strategy for each · why each will be effective.

Task shapes are from the official sample assignments in the *SDL Preparation Guide*. Your form's exact charge will differ; the counting structure — "two of these, one of those, and why" — is the constant.

WHAT EARNS THE POINTS

- ✓ **Mirror the task's bullets as your structure.** Three asks, three chunks. Graders scoring PURPOSE need to find coverage.
- ✓ **Attach "because..." to every claim.** Naked assertions score at 2.
- ✓ **Hit the counts exactly** — two issues means two, not one and not four.
- ✓ **Cite the documents** on document-based tasks: the number, the trend, the letter.
- ✓ **Answer as the superintendent**, in first person, doing superintendent-level things.
- ✓ **On the Case Study the action section is prospective.** "Should have..." belongs in the failures section, never in the actions.

WHAT LOSES THEM

- ✗ Writing long instead of writing complete. A rambling 700 words that misses a bullet still fails PURPOSE.
- ✗ Answering at building level — observing the teacher, running the PD session, calling the parent.
- ✗ Generic best practice with no anchor in the stimulus. If documents are provided and you never touch them, SUPPORT collapses.
- ✗ Proposing something unlawful, unbudgeted, or outside board policy.
- ✗ Naming a strategy without explaining *why* it will work — usually its own scored bullet.
- ✗ Typing your name in the answer box. Responses are scored anonymously.

BUDGET THE CLOCK LIKE THE WEIGHTS

The written half is worth as much as the multiple-choice half, and the long task alone carries twice the weight of the short one. A workable split inside the four hours: roughly **two hours for the 60 items, 25–35 minutes for the short assignment, 50–60 minutes for the long one**, and a reserve for review. Draft the long response before you polish anything.

If you only have one hour

Last pass before you walk in. Ten things, in order.

- **1. The weights.** 50% MC / 50% written on both parts; Assignment One 17%, Assignment Two 33%. On 104 the 33% task comes from Subarea I and the 17% task from Subarea II.
- **2. The three criteria, by name.** PURPOSE · APPLICATION OF CONTENT · SUPPORT. Say them out loud. They are not the SBL criteria.
- **3. The four task shapes and their counts.** Work Product, Case Study, Management Problem Solving, Educational Program Analysis — and how many issues, strategies and explanations each demands.
- **4. The Case Study rule.** Strengths and failures look backward; the required actions look *forward*. No “should have” in the action section.
- **5. The altitude rule.** You supervise principals, allocate across schools, build systems. Cross out any option where the superintendent does a principal's job — unless the item is testing delegation.
- **6. Board vs. superintendent.** The board sets policy and acts only as a body; you administer and recommend. Tenure, budget adoption and contract ratification are board actions on your recommendation.
- **7. The money spine.** May budget vote → levy limit (lesser of 2% or CPI, exclusions, 60% to override) → two defeats means contingency with zero levy growth → reserves are purpose-restricted → internal controls, claims auditor, external audit.
- **8. The compliance spine.** IDEA/CSE timelines and LRE · §504 · DASA · McKinney–Vento · Title I comparability and supplement-not-supplant · ESSA CSI/TSI/ATSI with DCIP and SCEP · mandated child abuse reporting.
- **9. The labor spine.** Taylor Law — no strikes, PERB, mandatory subjects. Triborough keeps an expired contract alive, steps and all. You negotiate, the board ratifies. Probation is four years for appointments on or after July 1, 2015; tenured discipline runs through §3020-a.
- **10. The default correct move.** Data from more than one source → involve the stakeholders who must live with it → act within board policy and law → build the system, not the one-off fix → monitor and adjust. Nearly every framework objective ends in *monitor and adjust*.

AND ONE THING TO STOP DOING

Stop hunting for a New York statute to cite in your written response. The rubric rewards **purpose, application and support** — not citation. Know the law well enough to avoid proposing something illegal and to name the right process (“through the CSE,” “in executive session,” “subject to negotiation”), then spend your words on the strategy and on *why it will work*.

PART IV

Law, Finance & District Operations

Governance and the board, the budget and the tax cap, internal controls and the audit function, personnel law, compliance, facilities — and the case law a superintendent is expected to state correctly. Every claim carries its authority, and the errors circulating in SDL study files are called out by name.

WHY THIS PAGE IS THE PRIORITY

Part Two Subarea II — objectives **0006** (district-level operational management), **0007** (district financial and facilities management) and **0008** (supervising compliance with federal, state and local mandates) — carries **23 selected-response items** plus the short written assignment. Part One objective **0001** adds the “professional and political environment of district leadership in New York State.”

How to use this page

A reference, not a reading assignment. Read the headings and the bold lead of each bullet; anything you cannot restate in a sentence is a study target. Most gaps are in finance mechanics and the personnel statutes, not the case law.

THE HONESTY RULE THIS PAGE RUNS ON

Every hard claim carries its authority. Where a figure is statutory and has been amended it is marked **confirm current** rather than asserted. A wrong section number in a written response is worse than no citation — name the mechanism and skip the number if unsure. The **Application of Content** criterion rewards naming the actual mechanism: “a 60 percent supermajority,” “the claims auditor,” “a manifestation determination.” Nothing here is legal advice; district counsel and the current Commissioner’s Regulations govern.

Regents & Commissioner Board & Superintendent BOCES & §310 Open Meetings & FOIL Ethics & Conflicts Budget Cycle Tax Cap & Contingency State Aid Fund Balance & Reserves Capital & Bonds Grants & Title I Internal Controls & Audit Purchasing & Bidding Tenure & §3020-a Taylor Law APPR & NYS-STEPS Certification IDEA & Part 200 504 · MLL · DASA · Title IX FERPA & §2-d ESSA Designations Attendance & Child Welfare Case Law Facilities & Operations Errors in Circulation

Governance: Regents, Commissioner, 8 NYCRR

- **Board of Regents — 17 members:** one per judicial district (13) plus **4 at-large, elected by the Legislature in joint session, serving without salary.** They head the **University of the State of New York**, adopt the Rules of the Board of Regents, and **appoint the Commissioner.** **confirm current** Term length was shortened to five years in 2016.
- **Commissioner** — appointed by and serving at the pleasure of the Regents; also President of USNY and chief administrative officer of NYSED. Adopts the Commissioner’s Regulations, decides **§310 appeals**, and may **remove a school officer** — board member or superintendent — for wilful violation or neglect of duty (§306).
- **The citation layer. Education Law** = statute. **8 NYCRR** = the code holding both the Rules of the Board of Regents and the Commissioner’s Regulations. “Part 200,” “Part 154,” “§100.2” are **regulation, not statute** — force of law, but they cannot exceed the statute.

Authority: N.Y. Const. art. XI; Education Law §§201–207, §§101, 305, 306; Title 8 NYCRR.

The board of education and the superintendent

Function	Board	Superintendent
Legal nature	A corporate body acting only at a properly convened meeting; an individual member has no authority alone	Chief executive officer of the district and its educational system
Core powers	Adopt policy · adopt the proposed budget · appoint and evaluate the superintendent · appoint staff on the superintendent's recommendation · grant tenure · approve contracts · adopt the code of conduct and safety plan	Recommend appointments, transfers and tenure · enforce all law and regulation · supervise principals and central staff · prepare the budget · report to the board
At meetings	Votes	May speak on all matters; does not vote
Training	Each new member completes at least six hours of training in financial oversight, accountability and fiduciary responsibility within the first year of the term	Arranges it, usually through BOCES or NYSSBA

POLICY VS. ADMINISTRATION – THE EXAM'S FAVORITE TRAP

When a board member calls about a personnel complaint, a bus route or a hiring preference: hear it, redirect the individual concern to the administrative channel that owns it, and put any genuine policy question before the **full board**. Options that have the superintendent quietly accommodating one member are distractors — so are options that publicly embarrass the member.

District types: common · union free · central · central high school · city — including the **Big 5** (New York City, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Yonkers), fiscally dependent on their municipalities with **no separate budget vote**. Types are governed by different statutory sections, so a section right for a central district can be wrong for a city district; NYC runs under **Education Law Article 52-A**.

Authority: Education Law §1709 (§1804 for central districts), §1711, §2102-a; §§2503, 2554; Art. 52-A.

District superintendents, BOCES, §310 appeals

BOCES – Ed. Law Article 40

- A **shared-services** entity: CTE, special education, itinerant services, professional development, data and technology (RIC), cooperative purchasing, administrative services.
- The **district superintendent** is both **chief executive of the BOCES** and the **Commissioner's field representative** — which is why they can act for the Commissioner in certain matters.
- Services must be **cooperative in nature** and **Commissioner-approved** to earn **BOCES aid**, paid on prior-year expense at the district's aid ratio — the reason a service is often cheaper through BOCES.
- The **Big 5 are not eligible**. BOCES has **no taxing authority**; component boards vote its administrative budget and BOCES bills them.

§310 appeals

- ✓ Any person **aggrieved by an official act** of a school officer or board may appeal — administrative, no fee, no lawyer required.
- ✓ **Filed within 30 days** of the act complained of (8 NYCRR Part 275); delay excusable for good cause.
- ✓ Typical subjects: residency, student discipline, board elections and budget votes, transportation, board member conduct.

- ✓ The **petitioner bears the burden**; decided on the papers. Decisions are **final**, reviewable only by **CPLR Article 78** on an arbitrary-and-capricious standard.
- ✓ **Why you care**: documented, noticed, policy-consistent process usually wins; ad hoc process usually loses even when the decision was right.

Authority: Education Law §1950 et seq., §310; 8 NYCRR Parts 275–277; CPLR Art. 78.

Open Meetings Law, executive session, FOIL

Two Public Officers Law statutes, routinely confused. Open Meetings governs *meetings*; FOIL governs *records*. A topic can be discussable in executive session and still be a disclosable record.

- Any gathering of a **quorum** to conduct public business is **open**, with notice to media and posted publicly. A work session, a “retreat” and a committee of the whole are all meetings.
- **Executive session is part of an open meeting, not an alternative.** Convene in public, then take a **motion identifying the general area of the subject**, carried by a **majority of the total membership**.
- **No appropriation of public money may be voted in executive session**; final action is normally public.
- Enforced by lawsuit; a court **may** void action taken in violation. The **Committee on Open Government** issues advisory opinions.

The eight permissible executive-session subjects (§105(1))	District example
Matters that would imperil public safety if disclosed	A building security vulnerability
Identity of a law enforcement agent or informer	An investigation source
Current or future criminal investigation or prosecution where disclosure would imperil law enforcement	An active theft investigation
Proposed, pending or current litigation	A pending due process hearing — “legal issues” generally is not enough
Collective negotiations under Civil Service Law Art. 14	Bargaining strategy and cost-out
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	A tenure recommendation. Note particular — “personnel” as a heading is not a lawful basis
Preparation, grading or administration of examinations	Test security
Proposed acquisition, sale or lease of real property or securities, where publicity would affect value	Negotiating a parcel near the bus garage

*Student-specific matters stay out of public session on **FERPA** grounds, not under §105 — know which authority you are invoking.*

FOIL – POL Article 6

- ✓ Records are **presumptively open**; the agency must prove an exemption. Each district designates a **Records Access Officer**.
- ✓ **Within 5 business days**: grant, deny in writing, or **acknowledge with an approximate date** — normally within **20 business days**.
- ✓ **Appeal** within **30 days** of denial; decision **within 10 business days**, appeal forwarded to the Committee on Open Government. Article 78 review, with fees available where the agency had no reasonable basis to deny.
- ✓ **Common exemptions**: unwarranted invasion of personal privacy; records endangering life or safety; inter- and intra-agency material that is not statistical or factual tabulation, staff instructions affecting the public, or final agency policy; and records exempted by other statute — how student records and building-level emergency response plans stay out.

- ✓ A requester **need not state a purpose**; commercial purpose is not a ground for denial.
- ✓ **The operational point:** most district FOIL failures are calendar failures. Log the 5- and 20-day dates, name a backup RAO, and treat an unanswered request as a constructive denial that starts an appeal clock.

Authority: Public Officers Law §§100–111 and §§84–90; Committee on Open Government.

confirm current

POL §103-a (remote participation) has been amended re

Conflicts of interest and the Code of Ethics

GML §§800–806

- **§800 — deemed interests:** an officer holds the interest of a **spouse, minor child, dependent**, a firm they belong to or work for, and a corporation they serve as officer, director or employee or control by stock.
- **§801 — the prohibition:** no interest in a district contract where the officer may **negotiate, prepare, authorize or approve it, authorize payment, audit claims, or appoint someone who does**. The test is whether the office touches the contract, not whether the person benefits.
- **§802 — exceptions** are narrow (including award to the lowest responsible bidder after public advertisement). Read them; do not assume them.
- **§803 —** disclose any interest **in writing, entered in the official record**. **§804 —** a prohibited contract is **void**. **§805 —** wilful violation is a **misdemeanor**.
- **§805-a:** no gift of \$75 or more suggesting influence; no use of confidential information for private gain; no compensation for services on a matter before the board; no contingent fees.
- **§806:** every district must **adopt, distribute and post a code of ethics**.

NYS Code of Ethics for Educators

Adopted by the Regents in **2002**. It is **aspirational** — not a disciplinary code and not a basis for revocation. Objective 103-0001 names it, so know the six principles.

1. Nurture the **intellectual, physical, emotional, social and civic potential of each student**.
2. Create and maintain **challenging learning environments for all**.
3. **Commit to their own learning** to develop their practice.
4. **Collaborate with colleagues** and other professionals for student learning.
5. **Collaborate with parents and community**, building trust and respecting confidentiality.
6. **Advance the intellectual and ethical foundation** of the learning community.

The **disciplinary** counterpart is different: revocation and moral-character proceedings run under **8 NYCRR Part 83**. Do not cite the Code of Ethics when the question is about Part 83.

THE SCENARIO THIS ALWAYS APPEARS AS

A board member steers business to a friend; a vendor offers tickets; a principal wants to hire a cousin. The chain: **disclose in writing on the record → recuse from negotiation, approval and audit → run the procurement under the GML §104-b policy or competitive bidding → document**. A relative is *not* barred from bidding — only from a process an interested officer participates in.

Authority: General Municipal Law §§800–806, §805-a; 8 NYCRR Part 83; NYS Code of Ethics for Educators (Regents, 2002).

The budget cycle and the annual vote

Outside the Big 5 the budget is a **ballot proposition**, and the statutory sequence is testable.

Milestone	Requirement	Cite
Levy limit filing	File the calculated tax levy limit with the State Comptroller, the Commissioner and Taxation and Finance by March 1	§2023-a
Property Tax Report Card	To NYSED, appended to public copies of the proposed budget, no later than 24 days before the vote	§1716
Budget statement	Available on request from 7 days before the hearing	§1716
Budget hearing	Not less than 7 nor more than 14 days before the vote	§§1608, 1716, 2022
Budget notice	Mailed to all qualified voters after the hearing, no later than 6 days before the vote ; compares spending and levy to the prior year and to the levy limit , and states whether a 60% supermajority is required	§2022(2-a)
The vote	Third Tuesday in May. The Commissioner may certify a move to the second Tuesday where the third conflicts with a religious observance	§2022(1)
Re-vote	Resubmit once , on the third Tuesday in June	§2007
Contingency	Failing twice — or not resubmitting — the board must adopt a contingency budget , effective July 1	§2023

CORRECTING THE CIRCULATING FINANCE DECK

The shared *School Finance Concepts* deck lists “**April 15 — BOE adopts both Proposed Budget and Contingency Budget.**” That is **not the statutory sequence**, and the deck predates the 2011 tax cap. Current law keys off the hearing, the notice, the Property Tax Report Card and the March 1 levy-limit filing — and contingency is adopted **after** a defeat.

Structures and vocabulary

- **Three-part budget** (required ballot presentation): **Administrative · Program · Capital**. The administrative share is politically loaded and capped under contingency.
- **Five-part expenditure classification**: General Support · Instruction · Transportation · Community Services · Undistributed (benefits, debt service).
- **Zero-based vs. incremental/rollover vs. program budgeting.**
- **Balanced by law**: appropriations may not exceed estimated revenues plus appropriated fund balance.
- **Tax rate** = $\text{levy} \div \text{assessed valuation} \times 100$. **True (full) value** = $\text{assessed value} \div \text{equalization rate}$. A district in several towns grosses up with equalization rates and **apportions the levy**.
- **A budget increase and a tax increase are not the same thing.**
- **Tax certiorari** — an assessment challenge requiring refunds if successful. **TANs** and **RANs** are cash-flow instruments, not project financing.

Stakeholder work the exam rewards

- ✓ Start with **goals and data**, not dollars — a budget framed as strategic priorities survives.
- ✓ Use an **advisory budget committee** (staff, parents, community, business), transparent about what is on the table.
- ✓ Publish **trade-offs, not totals**: what half a point of levy buys and costs, in programs and positions.

- ✓ Segment: the **board** needs multi-year projections and risk; **staff** need staffing implications; the **community** needs tax impact on a representative home and the cap calculation in plain language.
- ✓ Model **three years out** — single-year budgeting is the failure mode objective 103-0006 tests.
- ✓ **Never advocate a “yes” vote with district resources.** Factual information is permitted; public funds may not fund partisan advocacy.

Authority: Education Law §1716, §2022, §2007, §2023, §2023-a.

The tax levy limit and contingency budgets

The single largest gap in older SDL prep material. The cap took effect with **2012–13**.

How the levy limit works

- **Chapter 97 of the Laws of 2011** created **Education Law §2023-a** (GML §3-c for municipalities); made **permanent in 2019**.
- It limits the **tax levy** — total dollars raised — **not** the rate and **not** spending.
- **Allowable levy growth factor = the lesser of 2% or the annual CPI increase.** confirm current Published annually; never quote a year’s figure from memory.
- Not “last year plus 2%”: the formula runs through a **tax base growth factor**, **PILOT** adjustments and **carryover** of up to 1.5% of unused capacity, then the exclusions.
- **Statutory exclusions** — leviable above the limit without a supermajority: the local share of **capital expenditures net of building aid**; pension contributions from 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 levy.
- **Override**: a levy above the limit requires **60% of votes cast**, and the budget notice must say so.

Contingency under current law

- ✗ **The headline rule**: a contingency budget may levy **no more than the prior year’s levy — a 0% increase**. This replaced the pre-2011 approach and is what older material misses.
- ✗ 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 adopted budget.
- ✗ 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**.
- ✗ **Generally not contingent**: most equipment, new capital work other than emergency repairs, non-essential maintenance, and free public use of facilities — community groups must be charged at least cost.
- ✗ Contract salaries, debt service, student supplies, tuition and transportation obligations remain payable.
- ✗ **Consequence**: the gap between proposal and contingency is now large and predictable. Model it and say publicly what a defeat costs — the line between informing and campaigning is what a written task tests.

Authority: Education Law §2023-a (Ch. 97, L. 2011; permanent 2019), §2023; NYSED and OSC publish the annual calculation forms.

State aid and Foundation Aid

Three revenue sources

1. **Real property tax** — from assessed value; dominant in most districts.
2. **State aid** — formula-driven, designed to **equalize** what can be spent per child across communities of different wealth.
3. **Other** — federal aid, appropriated fund balance, tuition, interest, Medicaid, rentals.

The wealth dynamic: a low-wealth district depends more on state aid and raises less per point of tax effort. Two districts with identical tax rates can have very different per-pupil revenue — the equity argument in one sentence.

Equality (same dollars per pupil) · **Equity** (dollars adjusted so comparable outcomes are reachable) · **Adequacy** (enough to meet the standard). Foundation Aid rests on an *adequacy* logic.

Foundation Aid and expense-driven aids

- ✓ **Foundation Aid** — the principal general operating aid, enacted **2007** after *Campaign for Fiscal Equity v. State of New York*. 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, then **fully phased in as of 2023–24**; independently reviewed in 2024 with factors adjusted in later budgets. **confirm current** Never state a foundation amount, poverty measure, save-harmless rule or aid total from memory — use the NYSED State Aid Handbook and the year's enacted budget runs.
- ✓ **Expense-driven aids** reimburse a share of approved **prior-year** expenditure at a wealth-adjusted ratio: **Transportation, Building, BOCES, Special Education High Cost / Private Excess Cost**, and the **instructional materials** aids.
- ✓ **Why it matters:** today's spending generates later revenue at a known ratio — the arithmetic behind buy/lease/BOCES decisions, and behind treating reimbursement as if it were immediate or complete.
- ✓ **Combined wealth ratio** — property plus income wealth per pupil against the state average; drives most aid ratios. Below 1.0 is below-average wealth.
- ✓ **STAR** reduces the *homeowner's* bill; the state makes the district whole. **confirm current** Homeowners purchasing after the 2016 change generally receive the STAR **credit**, not the **exemption**.

Authority: Education Law §3602; *Campaign for Fiscal Equity, Inc. v. State of New York*, 100 N.Y.2d 893 (2003); N.Y. Const. art. XI, §1; NYSED State Aid Handbook.

Fund balance and reserve funds

THE NUMBER TO KNOW

Unrestricted (unassigned) general fund balance is limited by **Real Property Tax Law §1318(1)** to **4% of the ensuing year's budget**; excess must reduce the levy. The most frequently cited finding in Comptroller audits of New York districts.

Reserve	Purpose	Establishment / use	Cite
Capital	Capital projects and equipment	Voter authorization to establish (purpose, maximum, probable term) and to expend	Ed. Law §3651
Tax certiorari	Judgments and refunds from assessment challenges	Board action; unused amounts on a settled proceeding return to the general fund on a statutory schedule	Ed. Law §3651(1-a)
Repair	Repairs to capital improvements or equipment	Board action; expenditure generally requires a public hearing except in emergency	GML §6-d
Workers' compensation	Self-insured comp claims	Board action	GML §6-j
Unemployment insurance	Reimbursing the state fund	Board action	GML §6-m
Insurance	Uninsured property loss and liability	Board action, with statutory limits on annual contribution	GML §6-n
EBALR	Accrued unused leave payable on separation — not ordinary benefit costs	Board action	GML §6-p
Retirement contribution	ERS contributions; a teachers' retirement sub-fund was added in 2019 with its own cap	Board action; annual report to the board	GML §6-r

- **Reserves are not a slush fund.** Each is created under a specific statute for a specific purpose. The Comptroller regularly finds reserves never properly established, over-funded, or used for the wrong purpose.
- **Assigned is not unassigned.** Encumbrances and appropriated fund balance are not free money; the 4% test applies to what remains unassigned.
- **Adopt a written multi-year reserve plan** — purpose, target level, funding source and expected use per reserve, reviewed annually and disclosed with the budget.
- **Appropriating fund balance to hold down the levy is one-time revenue.** Repeating it builds a structural gap — the classic finding behind a fiscal stress designation.

Authority: Real Property Tax Law §1318; GML §§6-c–6-r; Education Law §3651; OSC, Reserve Funds (Local Government Management Guide).

Capital projects, bonds and building aid

The sequence

1. **Need established** from the **building condition survey**, the **five-year capital facilities plan**, enrollment projections and program requirements.
2. **Voter approval** — outside the Big 5, a proposition stating scope, maximum cost and financing.
3. **Commissioner's approval** of plans and specifications through the NYSED **Office of Facilities Planning**. **No project may be bid or begun without it.**
4. **Competitive bidding** under GML §103, with **Wicks Law** separate specifications above the applicable threshold. confirm current Wicks thresholds vary by region.
5. **Financing** — serial bonds under the **Local Finance Law**, usually preceded by **bond anticipation notes**.
6. **Building Aid** reimburses a wealth-adjusted share of **approved** costs on an assumed amortization schedule; cost above the maximum cost allowance and ineligible scope are **100% local**.

Failure modes & Smart Schools

- ✓ **Assuming aid on unapproved scope** — change orders expanding scope without approval are local dollars.
- ✓ **Ignoring the capital levy exclusion** — local capital debt sits **outside** the levy limit, which is why a capital proposition and the operating budget interact.
- ✓ **Treating the referendum as the communication plan** — capital votes are won on a documented condition survey, public prioritization and clear tax impact per representative home.
- ✓ **Deferring maintenance** converts an aidable capital expense into an unaidable emergency.

Smart Schools Bond Act. Approved by voters **November 2014**, authorizing **\$2 billion** in general obligation bonds for classroom technology and connectivity, school-wide broadband and wireless, **high-tech school safety**, replacing **transportable classroom units** with permanent space, and **pre-kindergarten classroom space**. Districts draw against an allocation only with a **Smart Schools Investment Plan** approved by the **Smart Schools Review Board** (Director of the Budget, Commissioner, SUNY Chancellor). confirm current Check remaining allocation and current submission guidance.

Authority: Education Law §3602(6), §408; 8 NYCRR Part 155; Local Finance Law; GML §103; Smart Schools Bond Act of 2014.

Grants, categorical aid and the federal fiscal rules

Rule	Requirement	Cite
Supplement, not supplant	Under ESSA a methodology test : the district shows the method used to allocate state and local funds gives each Title I school all it would receive if it were not Title I. It need not identify individual costs as supplemental	ESEA §1118(b)
Comparability	State and local services in Title I schools must be at least comparable , taken as a whole — shown by 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 the test can be met even where per-pupil spending differs	ESEA §1118(c)
Maintenance of effort	Combined state and local spending (aggregate or per pupil) at least 90% of the second preceding year, or allocations are reduced	ESEA §8521
IDEA MOE & excess cost	Special education spending may not fall below the prior year except under allowable exceptions; Part B funds may be used only for the excess costs of educating students with disabilities	34 C.F.R. §§300.202–203
CEIS	Up to 15% of IDEA Part B may be used voluntarily for early intervening services; a district identified with significant disproportionality must reserve 15% for comprehensive CEIS and review its policies, practices and procedures	34 C.F.R. §§300.226, .646
Uniform Guidance	Federal awards carry their own procurement, allowability, time-and-effort and property rules; where stricter than New York law, the stricter governs . Above the expenditure threshold a Single Audit is required	2 C.F.R. Part 200
Schoolwide vs. targeted	Schoolwide at 40% poverty (or by waiver) serves all students with a comprehensive needs assessment and schoolwide plan; targeted assistance serves only identified students	ESEA §§1114, 1115
Family engagement	An allocation over \$500,000 reserves at least 1% , with at least 90% distributed to schools and families involved in deciding its use	ESEA §1116

- **Categorical aid is restricted aid.** Title I, II-A, III, IV-A, IDEA 611/619, Perkins and state grants each carry allowable uses, reporting and a period of availability; most ESSA funds flow through the NYSED **Consolidated Application**.
- **Grants are not a staffing plan.** Write down what may be grant-funded (pilots, materials, time-limited positions) versus levy-funded (core instructional staffing), with a sunset plan for every grant-funded position.
- **Timely, meaningful, documented consultation with nonpublic schools** is a real ESSA and IDEA obligation — before decisions are made.
- **Grant-funded time must be documented** — the most common federal audit finding in school districts.

Authority: ESEA as amended by ESSA, 20 U.S.C. §6301 et seq.; 34 C.F.R. Part 300; 2 C.F.R. Part 200; NYSED Consolidated Application.

Internal controls, audit, and what Roslyn taught

These objectives do not test accounting. They test whether you know how public money goes missing and which structural control would have stopped it. Frame every item as: **name the missing control**.

The four audit roles

- **Claims auditor** — appointed by and reporting **directly to the board**. Audits **each claim before payment**: purchase order, authorization, receiving report, **original** invoice, clear description, and a finding that the expenditure is **actual, necessary and reasonable**. The **treasurer may pay only against an approved warrant**. May **not** be a board member, clerk, treasurer, superintendent, purchasing agent or their employee.
- **Internal auditor** — **risk assessment and controls testing**, reporting to the board through the audit committee, not to the business office. **confirm current** Very small districts have a statutory exemption — verify the threshold.

- **Audit committee** — board-appointed and **advisory**: helps select the external auditor, reviews the draft report and management letter with the auditor, receives internal audit reports and corrective action plans. Its power is giving the board a channel to the auditors that does not run through administration.
- **External independent auditor** — a CPA firm selected by **competitive RFP at least every five years**, reporting to the board, issuing the audit and a **management letter**. The board adopts a **corrective action plan within 90 days** and files it with NYSED.

Segregation of duties

Purpose: **timely detection of fraud and of innocent error**. Rule: **no single person performs a transaction beginning to end**.

- ✓ The same person cannot **accept cash, record it, deposit it and reconcile the account**.
- ✓ **The requestor cannot be the approver**; a knowledgeable secondary approver above a stated threshold.
- ✓ Bank statements reconciled **monthly** by someone with **no** cash receipt or disbursement duties.
- ✓ **System access limited to job function**, reviewed on role change, revoked at separation; vendor master file changes logged and reviewed by someone who cannot cut checks.
- ✓ **Check stock and signature devices secured**, with an independently reconciled sequential check log.
- ✓ **Payroll changes require a payroll action notice traceable to board approval** — never verbal.
- ✓ The board **routinely reviews** the treasurer's cash report, budget and revenue status, fund balance projections and the warrant — and asks about variances.
- ✓ **Small districts still segregate**: compensate with board-level review, rotation, mandatory vacations and independent reconciliation.

ROSLYN — \$11.2 MILLION, AND EVERY LINE IS A MISSING CONTROL

Uncovered in 2004; the case New York school finance is taught from. **(1)** No segregation of duties — a principal account clerk had access to the **signature plate**. **(2)** The claims auditor was **bypassed**: the large personal expenditures ran on **hand checks outside the normal process**. **(3)** **No warrants** between claims auditor and treasurer. **(4)** **No check log**, so sequence gaps went undetected. **(5)** No IS security — **vendor names changed after checks were issued**. **(6)** No board oversight — the monthly budget status report went unreviewed and chronically over-budget accounts were not a red flag. **(7)** **No cap on the superintendent's budget transfer authority**. **(8)** No travel policy limit; expense reports without backup. **(9)** Related-party consulting payments with nothing showing services rendered. **(10)** An external audit that caught none of it.

THE LEGISLATIVE RESPONSE

The **School District Accountability Act (Chapter 263 of the Laws of 2005)** and the Comptroller's five-point plan: **(1)** mandatory board member training in financial oversight; **(2)** an **internal audit function**; **(3)** an **audit committee**; **(4)** a **competitive RFP for audit firms at least every five years**; **(5)** stronger external audits with **direct board involvement** — plus annual audits of **extraclassroom activity funds** and required **corrective action plans**. **Attribution**: the plan belongs to Comptroller **Alan Hevesi**, who resigned in **December 2006**. **Thomas P. DiNapoli has been State Comptroller since 2007**. Decks naming Hevesi as sitting Comptroller are twenty years stale — the substance holds, the attribution does not.

- **OSC is independently elected** — not part of the Executive, not part of NYSED. It **audits districts and BOCES**, publishes district-specific and statewide topical audits (reserves, purchasing, payroll, IT security, extraclassroom funds), and requires a **corrective action plan** it then follows up on. Both report and response are public.

- **Fiscal Stress Monitoring System (2013): financial indicators** — fund balance, operating deficits, cash position, short-term debt — plus published **environmental indicators**. Classifications: **Significant · Moderate · Susceptible to Fiscal Stress · No Designation**.
- **What a designation means:** a public, comparative, longitudinal signal that rating agencies and communities both read. The answer is a multi-year plan with structural fixes, not a one-year fund balance appropriation.

Authority: Education Law §1709(20-a), §§2116-a, 2116-b, 2116-c; 8 NYCRR §170.12 and Part 172; Ch. 263, L. 2005; OSC Division of Local Government and School Accountabil

Purchasing and competitive bidding

Rule	Requirement	Cite
Thresholds	Purchase contracts above the statutory threshold and public works above a higher one must be publicly advertised and awarded to the lowest responsible bidder . confirm current Commonly cited as \$20,000 and \$35,000 ; statutory and amended over time	GML §103
Aggregation	Applies to the reasonably expected annual aggregate , not one order. Splitting to evade bidding is unlawful	GML §103
“Responsible”	Capacity, integrity and past performance are a separate finding the board must support in the record; rejecting a low bidder requires documented reasons	GML §103
Best value	Limited authority to award certain purchase contracts on best value where objective, quantifiable criteria are set in advance. confirm current Verify applicability to districts and contract type	GML §103(1)
Professional services	Auditors, attorneys, architects, engineers, brokers — not purchase contracts, not subject to bidding . They are subject to the §104-b policy, and an RFP with evaluated criteria is expected practice	GML §104-b
Procurement policy	Every district must adopt written policies for non-bid procurements, reviewed annually by the board , specifying when quotes or RFPs are required	GML §104-b
Exceptions	True emergencies (documented, limited to need) · sole source · OGS state contract · certain cooperative and piggyback purchasing from contracts let to the lowest responsible bidder · surplus property from another government	GML §§103, 104
Federal overlay	Federally funded purchases satisfy both New York bidding law and the Uniform Guidance; where they conflict, the stricter applies	2 C.F.R. §§200.318–327

HOW THIS SHOWS UP AS AN ITEM

A board member offers a friend who “can do it cheaper.” The right answer neither excludes the friend nor accepts the offer: **the requirement will be specified and publicly advertised as a request for bids, opened publicly, and awarded to the lowest responsible bidder — the acquaintance may bid like anyone else, and the board member takes no part in specification, evaluation, award or audit.**

Authority: General Municipal Law §103, §104-b; 2 C.F.R. Part 200; OSC, Seeking Competition in Procurement.

Tenure, probation and §3020-a

THE CORRECTION THAT MATTERS MOST

Circulating SDL material says New York’s probationary period is **three years**. It is **four years** for teachers and building principals appointed **on or after July 1, 2015** (Chapter 56 of the Laws of 2015). Three years remains correct only for earlier appointments. If an item gives you an appointment date, the date is the item.

Probation and tenure

- **Four-year probation** for teachers and building principals appointed on or after July 1, 2015.
- **The APPR condition:** tenure requires composite ratings of **Effective or Highly Effective in at least three of the four preceding years**, and an **Ineffective rating in the final probationary year** makes the person ineligible at that time.
- **Jarema credit** — prior regular substitute service in the same tenure area shortens probation up to the statutory maximum; miscomputing it is a classic way districts accidentally grant tenure.
- **Tenure by estoppel:** letting a probationer continue past the term without action can vest tenure by operation of law — why the tenure calendar is a central office responsibility.
- **Denial of tenure** may be for any lawful reason, on the superintendent's recommendation, with required advance notice before the board votes. **confirm current** Notice rules differ by statute and district type.
- **Probationers keep constitutional protection** — no dismissal for union activity, protected speech or discrimination; a stigmatizing accusation can require a name-clearing hearing.
- **confirm current** Probationary terms for **administrators other than building principals** depend on the appointing statute for your district type.

Tenure areas and excessing

- ✓ **Tenure is granted in a tenure area, not a job.** Areas are defined by **8 NYCRR Part 30** — elementary, middle grades, academic secondary subjects, special subjects, special education, and the administrative areas.
- ✓ **The 40% rule:** a person devoting **40% or more** of their time to a special subject tenure area must be appointed in that area. Assigning without regard to tenure area creates unintended tenure rights.
- ✓ **Excessing:** the person with the **least seniority within the tenure area of the abolished position** is excessed — seniority within the area, not district-wide.
- ✓ **Preferred eligible list for seven years;** the excessed employee must be offered a vacancy in the same or a **similar** tenure area before anyone else, judged on actual duties.
- ✓ **Why you care:** a reduction in force without a defensible seniority list is the most reversible personnel action a district takes; reinstatement with back pay is the standard remedy.

Education Law §3020-a

Step	Requirement
Charges	In writing , between the actual opening and closing of the school year; generally no charges more than three years after the alleged misconduct, except where it would be a crime
Probable cause	Majority vote of the full board within 5 days ; a written statement of charges, maximum penalty and rights is then served
Request for hearing	10 days from receipt. Failure to respond waives the hearing
Hearing officer	Parties have 15 days to agree from a list, or the Commissioner appoints
Pre-hearing conference	Within 10–15 days of the hearing officer agreeing to serve
Final hearing	No later than 60 days after the pre-hearing conference, extendable for extraordinary circumstances
Decision	Written, within 30 days of the last hearing day (10 days expedited)
Penalties	Reprimand · fine · suspension without pay for a fixed period · dismissal ; plus remedial measures — leave, continuing education, counseling
Review	Application to State Supreme Court under CPLR §7511 within 10 days of receipt; narrow standard
Pending	Generally suspended with pay pending the hearing — budget for it

- ✓ **§3020-b** provides an **expedited** procedure for charges based on a **pattern of ineffective teaching or performance** from consecutive Ineffective ratings, with shifted burdens. **confirm current** Triggers and burden allocations have been amended.
- ✓ **The district-scale lesson:** a §3020-a is won or lost in the building years earlier. Contemporaneous, fact-based, non-retaliatory documentation; write-ups describing evidence rather than conclusions; discipline applied consistently district-wide. Your job is **quality control on the record other people are creating**.
- ✓ **Settlement is normal**, but concealing misconduct affecting children is not, and New York requires reporting of certain resignations and settlements in lieu of charges to NYSED. **confirm current**

Authority: Education Law §3020-a, §3020-b, §§2509, 2573, 3012, 3014, §2510; 8 NYCRR Part 30; Ch. 56, L. 2015; CPLR §7511.

The Taylor Law, Triborough and negotiations

Civil Service Law Article 14

- The **Public Employees' Fair Employment Act** (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.
- **Improper practices (§209-a)**. Employer: interfering with employee rights, dominating an employee organization, discriminating to discourage membership, bad-faith negotiation, **and refusing to continue the terms of an expired agreement**. Union: interfering with rights, bad-faith negotiation, causing or engaging in a strike.
- **Strike penalties (§210)**: forfeiture of **two days' pay per day** on strike; loss of **dues deduction**; contempt exposure.
- **Mandatory vs. non-mandatory subjects**. Terms and conditions of employment are **mandatory**; core educational policy decisions — curriculum content, creating or abolishing a program — are generally **non-mandatory**, though the **impact** on unit members is negotiable. Getting the line wrong produces an improper practice charge.

Triborough and impasse

- ✓ **The Triborough Amendment (1982), §209-a.1(e):** refusing to continue the terms of an expired agreement until a new one is negotiated is an improper practice — so **salary step increments continue after expiration**.
- ✓ **Why it dominates New York bargaining.** The union's status quo is the expired contract *plus* steps, so time does not pressure it as in the private sector. With the tax cap, that is the central structural fact of a superintendent's bargaining position — and why settlements are often multi-year and back-loaded.
- ✓ **Impasse (§209): mediation → fact-finding with public, non-binding recommendations → for school districts, legislative determination:** the board may hold a public hearing and take such action as it deems in the public interest.
- ✓ **No binding interest arbitration for teachers** in New York — that applies to police and fire.
- ✓ Negotiations are an **executive-session topic** (POL §105(1)(e)), but the **ratification vote is public** and the executed agreement is a public record.

THE SUPERINTENDENT'S ACTUAL ROLE

The **board sets parameters** in executive session — range, priorities, non-starters. The **superintendent** leads or supervises the 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 failure the exam models: a settlement the district cannot fund under the levy limit, or a board member holding side conversations with union leadership. Both are answerable — **one team, one cost-out, one channel**. **Interest-based bargaining** is often the right answer where the stem emphasizes a damaged relationship, but it is a *process* choice, not a substitute for parameters and cost-out.

Authority: Civil Service Law §§200–214, §209, 209-a, 210; NYS Public Employment Relations Board.

APPR – §3012-d and NYS-STEPS (§3012-e)

Education Law §3012-d

- Covers **classroom teachers and building principals**; plans are **collectively bargained** and **Commissioner-approved**.
- **Two categories: Student Performance** (a required SLO, optional second measure) and **Observations / School Visits** against a state-approved rubric.
- **HEDI:** Highly Effective · Effective · Developing · Ineffective, combined through a **matrix** into a composite rating.
- **Observers:** the principal or another trained administrator **plus an impartial, independent, trained evaluator**; peer observation optional.
- **Grades 3–8 ELA and math state assessment results shall not be required to be used in any manner.**
- **Consequences:** an improvement plan after Developing or Ineffective; **expedited §3020-a** exposure on consecutive Ineffective ratings; and a general prohibition on assigning a student two consecutive years to teachers each rated Ineffective the prior year (waivable).

NYS-STEPS – §3012-e

- ✓ Created by **Chapter 143 of the Laws of 2024: Standards-based Educator Evaluation and Professional Support**.
- ✓ **Locally designed** plans — still bargained and Commissioner-approved — built on **multiple measures of practice** rather than a state-prescribed matrix.
- ✓ **Decouples school leader evaluation from teacher evaluation.**

- ✓ Requires alignment to the **NYS Teaching and Educational Leadership Standards**, including the **Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework**, with a **Level 1–4 rating per standard** rather than one composite.
- ✓ **Transition:** voluntary adoption **beginning 2024–25**; approved §3012-d plans may continue meanwhile; **all districts must adopt a STEPS plan by June 30, 2032**.
- ✓ **For the exam:** the SDL framework dates from 2008, so expect items keyed to the logic of evaluation — multiple measures, trained evaluators, inter-rater reliability, evaluation feeding professional development — rather than to a statute. Know both systems by name.

THE 104-0004 / 104-0005 CONNECTION

Evaluation is tested through **support to building leaders and staff** and **ongoing staff development**. The rewarded pattern: **evaluation data drives differentiated support**, not just personnel action. Name **inter-rater reliability calibration** for administrators, **aggregate rating analysis across schools** to locate supervision problems, and **professional learning targeted at the patterns the ratings reveal**.

Authority: Education Law §3012-d, §3012-e; Ch. 143, L. 2024; 8 NYCRR Subpart 30-3; NYSED Office of Educator Quality guidance.

Certification, clearance and staffing compliance

Requirement	Rule	Cite
Fingerprinting	Prospective employees of districts, BOCES and charter schools must be fingerprinted and cleared by NYSED before employment ; conditional and emergency conditional appointments are permitted in specified circumstances pending clearance	Ed. Law §§3004-b, 3035; 8 NYCRR Part 87
Certification	A valid certificate is required for the tenure area and assignment ; districts report out-of-certification assignments to NYSED	8 NYCRR Part 80
Incidental teaching	A superintendent may assign a certified teacher to a subject outside their certificate for no more than five classroom hours a week , and only when no certified or qualified teacher is available after extensive and documented recruitment	8 NYCRR §80-5.3
DASA training	Certification applicants complete at least six clock hours of harassment, bullying and discrimination prevention training	Ed. Law §14; 8 NYCRR §80-1.4
Moral character	Revocation and moral-character proceedings run under Part 83 ; districts must report conduct raising a moral character question	8 NYCRR Part 83
Substitutes and coaches	Substitute service limits, coaching certification and temporary coaching licenses are separately regulated; exceeding them is a routine audit finding	8 NYCRR §§80-5.4, 135.4

THE ADMINISTRATOR CERTIFICATE CHANGE

On **January 13, 2025** 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 Administrator certificate requires a passing score on **both** the SBL and SDL exams (or the Individual Evaluation Pathway), and the Superintendent Extension requires the Administrator certificate first. Existing **SBL, SAS and SDA** certificates continue to be recognized and holders need not convert. **confirm current** NYSED's no-conversion sentence names SBL, SAS and SDA and does not answer the question for SDL in those words — if you hold an SDL, confirm with the Office of Teaching Initiatives rather than inferring.

Authority: Education Law §3035; 8 NYCRR Parts 80, 83, 87; Regents action of January 13, 2025 (8 NYCRR §§52.21, 80-1.2, 80-4.3, 80-5.20, Subpart 80-3); NYSED Office of Teaching Initiatives

IDEA and Part 200 at district scale

A principal implements an IEP. A superintendent owns the **system** that produces, funds, staffs, monitors and defends IEPs across every building.

Obligation	Requirement	Cite
Child find	A written board plan and policy for locating, identifying and evaluating all resident children with disabilities — including homeless, wards of the state, migrant and parentally placed nonpublic students — and a register of eligible children	§200.2(a); 34 C.F.R. §300.111
CSE / CPSE	The board appoints the CSE, subcommittees and CPSE, and enough of them to meet timelines. Required CSE 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 and knowledgeable about the general curriculum and district resources ; and someone who can interpret evaluation results. A school physician and an additional parent member attend if requested in writing at least 72 hours in advance	Ed. Law §§4402, 4410; §200.3, 200.16
Referral → consent	Within 10 school days of a referral, request consent to evaluate or give the parent a copy of the referral with notice of intent to decline	§200.4(a)
Evaluation	Initial individual evaluation completed within 60 days of receipt of consent	§200.4(b)
Evaluation → services	For a student not previously identified , arrange programs and services within 60 school days of receiving consent; for an identified student referred for review, within 60 school days of referral; for an approved private school placement, within 30 school days of the board receiving the recommendation. Two clocks — 60 days for evaluation, 60 school days for services	§200.4(e)
Review	IEP reviewed at least annually ; reevaluation at least every three years , not more than once a year unless agreed	§200.4(b),(f)
District plan	Adopt and annually review a district plan for special education — including how appropriate space and program availability will be ensured — available for public inspection	§200.2(c)
Rtl	A district Response to Intervention policy is required, and a district may not use a severe discrepancy to determine a specific learning disability in reading, grades K–4	§§100.2(ii), 200.4(j)

LRE and the continuum

- LRE means education with non-disabled peers **to the maximum extent appropriate**; removal only when education there **with supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily**.
- **The continuum** runs from consultant teacher and related services through integrated co-teaching, resource room and special classes to day and residential placement — and the district must **operate enough of it** that placement is a real decision.
- **The district-level failure mode**: placement patterns driven by which program the district happens to run in which building — what state LRE data reviews detect.
- **Disproportionality**: the state reviews districts for **significant disproportionality** by race and ethnicity in identification, placement and discipline; identification triggers a **mandatory 15% comprehensive CEIS reservation** and a policy review.

Due process – two tiers

- ✓ **Impartial hearing officers** are NYSED-certified and rotationally appointed; the district appoints from the list and pays the IHO.

- ✓ **Resolution session** within 15 days of the complaint; a **30-day resolution period**; the decision is due **within 45 days after that period ends**, subject to properly granted extensions.
- ✓ **Two tiers**: an IHO decision is appealed to the **State Review Officer**, then to court. Most states abolished the second tier; New York did not.
- ✓ **Pendency (stay-put)** is **automatic** — the student stays in the then-current placement during proceedings without any showing of harm.
- ✓ **Other routes: mediation** at state expense and a **state complaint** to NYSED resolved within 60 days.
- ✓ **Cost exposure**: prevailing parents may recover attorney's fees, and tuition reimbursement is available where the district's program was inappropriate and the parents' was appropriate. A budget line, not a theoretical risk.

DISCIPLINE OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES – PART 201

Removal beyond **10 consecutive school days** — or removals forming a **pattern** totalling more than 10 school days in a year — is a **disciplinary change of placement**. A **manifestation determination review** must occur **immediately if possible and no later than 10 school days** after the decision. Two prongs: was the conduct **caused by, or directly and substantially related to**, the disability, or **the direct result of the district's failure to implement the IEP**? If either is yes: conduct an FBA, implement a BIP, and return the student to the prior placement unless the parties agree otherwise — and a failure-to-implement finding obliges immediate remedy. **Regardless of manifestation**, a student may be placed in an **interim alternative educational setting for up to 45 school days** for **weapons, illegal drugs or controlled substances, or infliction of serious bodily injury**. **Services continue** during any removal beyond 10 cumulative days.

Authority: IDEA, 20 U.S.C. §1400 et seq. and §1415(k); 34 C.F.R. Part 300; Education Law §§4402, 4404, 4410; 8 NYCRR Parts 200, 201.

Section 504, MLLs, DASA, McKinney-Vento, Title IX

Section 504 and ADA Title II

- **29 U.S.C. §794**; regulations at **34 C.F.R. Part 104**. Broader than IDEA — it reaches **students, parents and employees**, program accessibility, athletics, trips and district communications.
- **Three prongs**: an impairment that **substantially limits a major life activity**; a **record** of one; or being **regarded as** having one. The ADA Amendments Act broadened “substantially limits” and directs that mitigating measures (other than ordinary eyeglasses) are **not** considered.
- **FAPE under 504** = regular or special education and related aids and services meeting individual needs **as adequately as the needs of students without disabilities are met**; implementing an IDEA IEP satisfies it.
- **District duties most often missed**: designate a **504 coordinator**, publish a **notice of nondiscrimination**, and adopt **grievance procedures for prompt and equitable resolution** — recipient-level obligations, not building ones.
- **Evaluation and placement** by a **group of knowledgeable persons** using varied sources, with notice, record review, an **impartial hearing** and a review procedure.

MLL/ELL – CR Part 154

- ✓ **Identification within 10 school days of initial enrollment** — the **Home Language Questionnaire**, an individual interview in English and the home language, and the **NYSITELL**.
- ✓ **Five levels**: Entering · Emerging · Transitioning · Expanding · Commanding, with required **Integrated ENL** and **Stand-alone ENL** units of study scaling by level. **confirm current** Use the current Part 154-2 minutes table; do not quote minutes from memory.

- ✓ **Bilingual education is required at scale:** with **20 or more ELLs of the same grade level and home language** in a building (or across two contiguous grades), the district must provide a **bilingual education program** — a staffing and program-siting decision, which is why it is a 104-0006/0007 issue and not only a curriculum issue.
- ✓ **NYSESLAT annually;** exiting is followed by **two years of Former ELL monitoring and support**.
- ✓ **Parent rights:** orientation and notification **in the preferred language**, the right to decline bilingual education (but not ENL service), and interpretation for meaningful participation — a Title VI obligation independent of Part 154.
- ✓ Part 154 drives certification demand, scheduling and a required district ELL/MLL plan; under-service is simultaneously a Title VI and a state compliance exposure.

DASA – Ed. Law Article 2

- ✗ **Protected characteristics:** race, color, **weight**, national origin, ethnic group, religion, religious practice, disability, sexual orientation, gender (including gender identity and expression), or sex.
- ✗ **Harassment/bullying** = creating a hostile environment by conduct, threats, intimidation or abuse, **including cyberbullying**.
- ✗ Each school designates a trained **Dignity Act Coordinator**, publicized to staff, students and families.
- ✗ **Reporting clock:** an employee who witnesses or receives a report **orally notifies the principal, superintendent or designee no later than one school day** and files a **written report within two school days** of the oral notification.
- ✗ The principal, superintendent, designee or DAC **leads or supervises a thorough, prompt investigation** and **notifies law enforcement promptly** where conduct may be criminal.
- ✗ **Material incidents are reported annually to NYSED** through the School Safety and Educational Climate collection — public, and a district-level accountability artifact.
- ✗ **Your job:** consistency across buildings. Wildly different incident counts between comparable schools usually mean different reporting practice, not different behavior.

McKinney-Vento and Title IX

Students in temporary housing — federal McKinney-Vento; New York **Ed. Law §3209** and **8 NYCRR §100.2(x)**.

- ✓ Definition: lacking a **fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence** — doubled up from loss of housing or economic hardship, shelters, motels, cars, places not designed for sleeping.
- ✓ **School of origin or school of current location**, on a **best-interest determination made with the parent**. **Immediate enrollment** without records, immunization records or proof of residency.
- ✓ **The district pays for transportation** to the school of origin, continuing for the remainder of the year after permanent housing is obtained. Each district designates a **liaison**; disputes require written notice and **immediate enrollment pending resolution**.
- ✓ **Unaccompanied youth** may enroll without parental consent or guardianship papers.

Title IX — 20 U.S.C. §1681; 34 C.F.R. Part 106. Covers sex-based harassment and violence, **pregnancy discrimination**, equal athletic opportunity and **retaliation**. Districts designate a **Title IX Coordinator**, publish a notice of nondiscrimination and adopt grievance procedures.

CURRENCY – GET THIS RIGHT

The **2024 Title IX Rule** was vacated nationwide on **January 9, 2025** (*Tennessee v. Cardona*, E.D. Ky.). OCR enforces Title IX under the **2020 Rule**.

Authority: 29 U.S.C. §794 and 34 C.F.R. Part 104; ADA Title II; 8 NYCRR Part 154; Education Law §§11, 13, §3209; 42 U.S.C. §11431 et seq.; 20 U.S.C. §1681 and 34 C.F.R. Part 106

Student data privacy – FERPA and Education Law §2-d

FERPA is the floor; New York built a higher one, **administered at the district level**. A clear 104-0008 topic and one of the least covered in older prep material.

FERPA

- Rights belong to parents and **transfer to the eligible student at age 18 or upon postsecondary enrollment**, whichever comes first.
- **Education records** = records directly related to a student and maintained by the agency. **Excluded:** sole-possession records, law enforcement unit records, treatment records.
- **Directory information** may be disclosed if designated and noticed, with a family **opt-out**; it may not include an SSN or an ID usable alone for system access.
- **Consent exceptions:** **school officials with a legitimate educational interest**, a school where the student seeks to enroll, and a **health or safety emergency**.
- **Inspection** within a reasonable time, **not more than 45 days**; families may seek **amendment**, with a **hearing** if denied; **annual notification** of rights is required.

Ed. Law §2-d / 8 NYCRR Part 121

- ✓ **Parents' Bill of Rights for Data Privacy and Security** — adopted, **published on the website**, and **appended to every third-party contract** involving personally identifiable information.
- ✓ **Data Protection Officer** — every educational agency must designate one.
- ✓ **A data security and privacy policy aligned to the NIST Cybersecurity Framework**, adopted and published.
- ✓ **Third-party contracts** must include a **data security and privacy plan** and the contractor's signed **supplemental information**: exclusive purposes of use, subcontractor oversight, contract term and data disposition at its end, how parents may challenge accuracy, and where and how data is stored and protected.
- ✓ **Prohibited:** selling PII or using it for **marketing or commercial purposes**.
- ✓ **Annual training** for officers and employees with access to PII.
- ✓ **Breach notification:** a contractor notifies the agency **no more than 7 calendar days** after discovery; the agency notifies affected parents, eligible students, teachers or principals **no more than 60 calendar days** from discovery and reports to NYSED's **Chief Privacy Officer**.
- ✓ **A complaint procedure** with a stated response process; complaints may also go to the Chief Privacy Officer.

WHY THIS IS THE SUPERINTENDENT'S PROBLEM, NOT THE IT DIRECTOR'S

Every free classroom app a teacher signs up for is a third-party contract if it receives student PII. The architecture — an approved-application process, a standard contract rider, a DPO with real authority, annual training — only works if the superintendent owns it and the board adopts it as policy. Districts that treat §2-d as a procurement formality find the gap during a breach, when the 7-day and 60-day clocks are already running.

Authority: 20 U.S.C. §1232g and 34 C.F.R. Part 99; Education Law §2-d; 8 NYCRR Part 121; NYSED Chief Privacy Officer guidance.

ESSA designations and what a district owes an identified school

The designations

- **CSI** — Comprehensive Support and Improvement: 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. Identified by the **state**.
- **TSI** — one or more **consistently underperforming subgroups**.
- **ATSI** — a subgroup performing at or below the level that would place the school among the lowest-performing if all students performed that way.
- New York also publishes recognition categories and “Local Support” status.
- **Accountability subgroups**: All Students plus racial and ethnic groups, economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and English language learners, subject to minimum *n*-size.
- **confirm current** Indicators, weightings, identification cycle and minimum *n* are set in the approved state ESSA plan and have been amended.

What the district owes

- ✓ **Plan structure in New York**: each identified school produces a **School Comprehensive Education Plan (SCEP)** from a needs assessment with stakeholder participation; a district with identified schools produces a **District Comprehensive Improvement Plan (DCIP)**. **CSI plans require district and state approval and are state-monitored; TSI plans are district-approved and district-monitored** — a clean item stem.
- ✓ **Resource equity review**. Plans must identify and address **resource inequities**: staffing, funding, access to advanced coursework and experienced teachers *across* schools — analysis a superintendent can do and a principal cannot.
- ✓ **Evidence-based interventions** at the tiers ESSA defines. “We will implement a new program” is not a plan; the evidence tier and the implementation supports are.
- ✓ **Support, not just supervision**: a named central office liaison, differentiated professional learning, schedule and staffing flexibility, data access, and protection of the principal’s time.
- ✓ **Receivership**. Education Law §211-f makes the **superintendent a receiver** for persistently struggling and struggling schools — authority to develop an intervention plan, expand the day or year, convert to a community school, require staff to reapply and abolish positions, subject to a **Community Engagement Team** — with an **independent receiver** if improvement does not follow. **confirm current** Check whether any school is presently identified.

Authority: ESEA as amended by ESSA, §1111(c)–(d); Education Law §211-f; 8 NYCRR §100.19; NYSED ESSA accountability materials and the approved New York State ESSA

Attendance, immunization and child welfare reporting

Obligation	Rule	Cite
Right to attend	A person over 5 and under 21 without a diploma may attend the public schools of the district where they reside , tuition free. Residency — not immigration status, not property ownership — is the test	Ed. Law §3202
Compulsory education	Required from age 6 (a child turning six on or before December 1 attends from the start of that year) through age 16 ; a board may by resolution require attendance to 17 . confirm current The compulsory age has been the subject of legislative proposals	Ed. Law §3205
Attendance policy	A comprehensive attendance policy : a register, period-by-period recordkeeping in secondary schools, coding of excused and unexcused absence, intervention strategies, parent notification, incentives, and an annual board review of the data with revision if goals are not met	8 NYCRR §104.1
Immunization	A principal may not permit attendance beyond 14 days without proof (extendable to 30 days for an out-of-state or out-of-country transferee whose records are being obtained). The religious exemption was repealed effective June 13, 2019 — only a valid medical exemption remains	Public Health Law §2164
Mandated reporting	Teachers, counselors, psychologists, social workers, nurses and administrators are mandated reporters . The standard is “ reasonable cause to suspect ,” not proof. You do not investigate first . Report 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 with civil liability	SSL §§413, 419
Written report	The oral report is followed by a written report on form LDSS-2221A . confirm current Commonly cited as 48 hours (SSL §415) — confirm against the current form instructions before training staff on a number	SSL §415
Child abuse in an educational setting	A separate obligation. An employee or volunteer receiving an allegation of abuse by an employee or volunteer in an educational setting promptly completes a written report to the superintendent , who, on finding reasonable suspicion, promptly notifies law enforcement or the district attorney . Annual written information on the process goes to all employees and parents	Ed. Law Art. 23-B, §§1125–1133
Corporal punishment	Prohibited , with narrow exceptions for reasonable force to protect from injury, obtain a weapon, or restrain or remove a disruptive pupil where alternatives are exhausted. Semi-annual reports of complaints filed with the Commissioner	8 NYCRR §100.2(l)

TWO REPORTING SYSTEMS, TWO CLOCKS

Suspected abuse or maltreatment by a parent or person legally responsible → the **Statewide Central Register** under SSL §413. Suspected abuse by a school employee or volunteer in an educational setting → the **Article 23-B** process, running through the **superintendent** to law enforcement. Different statutes, different recipients — a district needs written procedures for both, and confusing them is an easy distractor.

Authority: Education Law §§3202, 3205, §§1125–1133; Social Services Law §§413, 415, 419; Public Health Law §2164; 8 NYCRR §§100.2(l), 104.1.

Case law district leaders are expected to know

One line of holding, one line on why you care. Several circulating SDL case-note files state these incorrectly; those errors are collected in the last section.

Student expression

Case	Holding	Why you care
Tinker v. Des Moines 393 U.S. 503 (1969)	Student expression is protected unless it would materially and substantially disrupt school operation or invade others' rights; undifferentiated fear is not enough	Write the code of conduct so discipline rests on disruption , not disagreement
Bethel v. Fraser 478 U.S. 675 (1986)	Schools may discipline lewd, vulgar or plainly offensive speech at a school event without showing disruption	Narrow — vulgarity, not viewpoint
Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier 484 U.S. 260 (1988)	Educators may control school-sponsored expressive activities when their actions are reasonably related to legitimate pedagogical concerns	If the activity bears the school's imprimatur — newspaper, yearbook, theater — <i>Hazelwood</i> governs, not <i>Tinker</i>
Morse v. Frederick 551 U.S. 393 (2007)	Speech at a school-supervised event reasonably viewed as promoting illegal drug use may be restricted	Narrow — not a license to punish speech administrators dislike
Mahanoy Area SD v. B.L. 594 U.S. 180 (2021)	A vulgar off-campus post could not be punished. Schools keep some interest in off-campus speech but it is diminished — parents have primary responsibility off campus, regulating both spheres would mean 24-hour regulation, and schools have an interest in protecting unpopular expression. No bright-line rule	Answers the open question older SDL notes leave hanging. Districts retain authority over severe bullying and harassment, threats, test-security breaches and misuse of school systems — write your code's off-campus reach to those categories
Bd. of Educ. v. Pico 457 U.S. 853 (1982)	A plurality: a board may not remove library books because it dislikes the ideas ; removal must rest on educational suitability, not political orthodoxy	Keep a written reconsideration procedure and document the educational grounds

Due process, search and discipline

Case	Holding	Why you care
Goss v. Lopez 419 U.S. 565 (1975)	A suspension up to 10 days requires notice of the charges , an explanation of the evidence if denied, and an opportunity to respond	Codified at Ed. Law §3214: a principal's suspension of 1–5 school days with an informal conference on request; a superintendent's hearing with counsel and cross-examination for anything longer
New Jersey v. T.L.O. 469 U.S. 325 (1985)	School officials need only reasonable suspicion ; the search must be justified at its inception and reasonable in scope	The most-tested rule here. Train administrators to state the facts supporting suspicion <i>before</i> searching
Vernonia v. Acton 515 U.S. 646 (1995) and Bd. of Educ. v. Earls 536 U.S. 822 (2002)	<i>Vernonia</i> upheld suspicionless random drug testing of athletes ; <i>Earls</i> extended it to all students in competitive extracurricular activities — reduced privacy expectations, minimally intrusive collection, confidential non-punitive use of results	correction Circulating notes call extracurricular testing unconstitutional — superseded by Earls . Neither case authorizes testing the entire student body
Safford v. Redding 557 U.S. 364 (2009)	A strip search of a 13-year-old for prescription-strength ibuprofen violated the Fourth Amendment — the suspicion did not support the degree of intrusion	Intrusiveness must match suspicion and danger. The rule most districts adopt: no strip searches, ever
Ingraham v. Wright 430 U.S. 651 (1977)	The Eighth Amendment does not apply to school corporal punishment; excess is addressed through state tort and due process law	Academic in New York, where 8 NYCRR §100.2(l) prohibits corporal punishment and requires semi-annual reporting

Students with disabilities

Case	Holding	Why you care
Bd. of Educ. v. Rowley 458 U.S. 176 (1982)	FAPE requires an IEP reasonably calculated to enable the child to receive educational benefit — not maximization . The Court ruled for the district , which had denied an interpreter to a deaf student who was progressing	correction A circulating item keys this as if the parents won. <i>Rowley</i> also set the two-part inquiry: procedural compliance plus a substantively reasonable IEP
Andrew F. v. Douglas County 580 U.S. 386 (2017)	An IEP must enable progress appropriate in light of the child's circumstances ; the Court rejected a “merely more than <i>de minimis</i> ” standard and required an appropriately ambitious program	The current FAPE standard — it raised the bar without overruling <i>Rowley</i> . “Some progress” is no longer a defense
Honig v. Doe 484 U.S. 305 (1988)	No “dangerousness” exception to IDEA's stay-put provision; removal beyond 10 school days is a change of placement requiring process. Schools may seek injunctive relief from a court	correction Notes saying removal is “only permitted with the parent's permission” use pre-1997 framing . As amended in 1997 and 2004: stay-put + manifestation determination + up to 45 school days in an interim alternative educational setting for weapons, drugs or serious bodily injury
Luna Perez v. Sturgis 598 U.S. 142 (2023)	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 — involve counsel earlier
Sch. Bd. of Nassau Cnty. v. Arline 480 U.S. 273 (1987)	A contagious disease may be a disability under §504; the questions are whether the person is otherwise qualified and whether reasonable accommodation is possible, on medical evidence rather than fear	The template for every health-based exclusion decision, students and employees alike

Employee speech and harassment liability

Case	Holding	Why you care
Pickering v. Bd. of Educ. 391 U.S. 563 (1968)	A teacher could not be dismissed for a newspaper letter 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 service	Before acting on public criticism: public concern, and an actual operational disruption? "It embarrassed the district" is not the test
Mt. Healthy v. Doyle 429 U.S. 274 (1977)	The call to a radio station was protected; but even where protected conduct was a motivating factor , the employer avoids liability by proving it would have reached the same decision anyway	correction A circulating item keys this as upholding the firing. It remanded and created the burden-shifting test — which is why contemporaneous documentation of performance problems protects a district
Garcetti v. Ceballos 547 U.S. 410 (2006)	Statements made pursuant to official duties are not citizen speech and are not shielded from employer discipline	New York's whistleblower and Taylor Law protections operate independently — not a license to retaliate
Gebser v. Lago Vista ISD 524 U.S. 274 (1998)	Teacher-on-student harassment: Title IX damages only where an official with authority to institute corrective measures had actual knowledge and was deliberately indifferent	Why every complaint must reach a person with authority, and the response must be prompt and documented
Davis v. Monroe County 526 U.S. 629 (1999)	Student-on-student harassment: liability where the district is deliberately indifferent to known harassment so severe, pervasive and objectively offensive that it bars access to education, in a context it substantially controls	correction Notes saying <i>Gebser's</i> standard applies unchanged to peer harassment are wrong — <i>Davis</i> adds severity and control. DASA obliges action well below the <i>Davis</i> threshold
Franklin v. Gwinnett County 503 U.S. 60 (1992)	Monetary damages are available in a private Title IX action	Why Title IX exposure is a budget risk, not only a compliance obligation

Religion, equity and access

Case	Holding	Why you care
Lemon v. Kurtzman 403 U.S. 602 (1971) → Kennedy v. Bremerton 597 U.S. 507 (2022)	<i>Lemon's</i> three-part test (secular purpose · effect neither advancing nor inhibiting religion · no excessive entanglement) is no longer the framework . <i>Kennedy</i> said the Court had long ago abandoned <i>Lemon</i> , directing analysis by historical practices and understandings , and held a coach's quiet post-game prayer was protected private religious expression	correction Nearly every circulating case-note file still teaches <i>Lemon</i> as current law. A district may not suppress an employee's personal religious expression merely to avoid an Establishment Clause appearance; the analysis turns on coercion
Engel (1962) · Abington (1963) · Lee v. Weisman (1992) · Santa Fe ISD v. Doe 530 U.S. 290 (2000)	School-sponsored prayer remains unconstitutional: an official Regents prayer, devotional Bible reading, a clergy-led graduation invocation, and student-led prayer over the PA at football games under school policy all fail	correction Notes calling student-led prayer at athletic events “a gray area” are out of date — <i>Santa Fe</i> resolved it in 2000 . School-sponsored and coerced exercise is prohibited; genuinely private expression is protected
Brown v. Bd. of Educ. 347 U.S. 483 (1954)	Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal ; overruled <i>Plessy</i> in public education and ended <i>de jure</i> segregation	The foundation of subgroup accountability and disproportionality review. <i>Swann</i> (1971) later upheld busing as a remedy
Lau v. Nichols 414 U.S. 563 (1974)	Identical instruction to students who do not understand English is not equal treatment; under Title VI districts must take affirmative steps	The foundation of ENL and bilingual obligations, with the EEOA (20 U.S.C. §1703(f)) and the <i>Castañeda</i> test — sound theory, adequate resources, demonstrated results
Plyler v. Doe 457 U.S. 202 (1982)	A state may not deny free public education to children because of their immigration status	Verify residency and age ; do not require immigration documentation, ask about status, or condition enrollment on a Social Security number
Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard / UNC 600 U.S. 181 (2023)	The universities' race-conscious admissions programs violated the Equal Protection Clause and Title VI	Applies to selective admissions, not general K–12 assignment — but it is why notes citing <i>Bakke</i> as settled law mislead

HOW TO DEPLOY A CASE IN A WRITTEN RESPONSE

Do not recite facts. Name the case, state the **operative standard in one clause**, then apply it: “Because *T.L.O.* requires that a search be justified at its inception and reasonable in scope, I would direct principals to document the facts supporting suspicion before any search and prohibit searches of the person.” That is **Application of Content** plus **Support** in one sentence. A case name with no standard attached earns nothing.

Facilities, transportation, food service, emergency planning

Obligation	Requirement	Cite
Annual visual inspection	Each occupied building, in the years between building condition surveys	8 NYCRR §155.4
Building condition survey	Comprehensive survey of each occupied building by a licensed architect or engineer, every five years , feeding capital planning	8 NYCRR §155.4
Five-year capital facilities plan	Building condition, capacity and program needs — the document that makes a capital referendum defensible	8 NYCRR Part 155
Health and safety committee	District officials, staff, bargaining unit representatives and parents; participates in the annual visual inspection and monitors safety during construction in occupied buildings	8 NYCRR §155.4
Plan approval	No construction, alteration or reconstruction without Commissioner approval of plans and specifications	Ed. Law §408; Part 155
Fire safety inspection	Annual inspection by a qualified inspector, report filed with the Commissioner	Ed. Law §807-a
Emergency drills	12 per year: 8 evacuation and 4 lockdown , with 8 completed by December 31 . confirm current Recent amendments address trauma-informed drill practice and advance parent notification	Ed. Law §807
AHERA / asbestos	A current asbestos management plan per building available for public review; a trained AHERA Designated Person ; six-month periodic surveillance ; three-year re-inspection by an accredited inspector; annual written notification to parents, staff and employee organizations	15 U.S.C. §2641 et seq.; 40 C.F.R. Pt. 763, Subpt. E
Lead in drinking water	Test all potable outlets, report and remediate above the action level. confirm current The action level was lowered and the retesting cycle reset — verify with the Department of Health	Public Health Law §1110
Green cleaning & pesticides	Environmentally sensitive cleaning products required; pesticide applications require advance notification ; pesticide use on school playgrounds and turf is prohibited with narrow emergency exceptions	Ed. Law §§409-h, 409-i; Child Safe Playing Fields Act
AEDs	On-site automated external defibrillators with trained staff during instructional hours and at school-sponsored athletic events	Ed. Law §917

Transportation

- **Statutory mileage limits:** transport students in **grades K–8 living more than 2 miles** and **grades 9–12 living more than 3 miles** from school, **up to 15 miles**. Shorter minimums may be adopted by **voter proposition**.
- **Nonpublic and charter students** must be transported on the **same basis** within the mileage limits; a parent's written request is due **by April 1** for the following year, and an untimely request may generally be denied on cost grounds.
- **Students with disabilities:** special transportation is a **related service written into the IEP** — door-to-door, an aide, a lift bus, temperature control, shortened ride time. Not discretionary, not a mileage question.
- **Students in temporary housing** go to the school of origin regardless of ordinary mileage limits.
- **Driver qualification** under **Vehicle and Traffic Law Article 19-A**; buses are subject to **DOT inspection** on a fixed cycle.
- **Transportation Aid** reimburses a wealth-adjusted share of approved prior-year expense including approved bus purchases — so buy/lease/contract is an aid calculation, not just a cash calculation.

- confirm current New York enacted a **zero-emission school bus** requirement with purchase and fleet-conversion deadlines; the timeline has been amended.

Food service and emergency planning

- ✓ **Federal programs.** National School Lunch and Breakfast are USDA programs administered by NYSED Child Nutrition, carrying meal pattern requirements, **Smart Snacks** competitive-food rules and an **administrative review** cycle.
- ✓ **The school lunch fund is a special revenue fund** expected to be **self-sustaining**; general-fund subsidy of deficits and excess food service fund balance are both audit topics.
- ✓ **Community Eligibility Provision** lets high-poverty schools serve all meals at no charge based on an identified student percentage. confirm current New York moved toward statewide universal free school meals in recent budgets — confirm the current year's funding, eligibility and claiming rules with NYSED Child Nutrition.
- ✓ **Procurement:** food bought with federal funds must satisfy both GML §103 and the Uniform Guidance, and a food service management company contract requires the state prototype contract and approval.
- ✓ **Project SAVE safety planning:** a **district-wide school safety plan**, which is **public**, and **building-level emergency response plans**, which are **confidential** and FOIL-exempt, including floor plans and blueprints.
- ✓ The **district-wide safety team is appointed by the board**; the **building-level team is appointed by the principal** and includes law enforcement. Plans are reviewed **at least annually**; the district-wide plan is available for **public comment at least 30 days** before adoption with at least one public hearing; building-level plans go to **local law enforcement and the State Police within 30 days** of adoption.
- ✓ **Code of conduct (§2801):** developed **in collaboration** with student, teacher, administrator and parent organizations, safety personnel and other staff; **reviewed and updated annually** with at least one public hearing; a plain-language summary given to students and mailed to parents before the school year; filed with the Commissioner within **30 days** of adoption.
- ✓ **Emergency management at district scale:** an incident command structure matching the county's, mutual-aid agreements, a communications plan with pre-drafted templates and a named spokesperson, continuity of operations (payroll, food, transportation, special education services) and **after-action review**. Name reunification, communication and continuity — not "call 911 and notify parents."

Authority: Education Law §§807, 807-a, §917, §3635, §§2801, 2801-a; 8 NYCRR Part 155; 40 C.F.R. Pt. 763 Subpt. E; Public Health Law §1110; VTL Art. 19-A; 7 C.F.R. Pts. 210, 2

Errors circulating in SDL prep materials – corrected

If you have studied from practitioner case notes, a New York finance slide deck, or a locally written district item bank, these are the exact claims to unlearn.

What circulating material says	What is actually true	Authority
Dismissal during the three-year probationary period	Four years for teachers and building principals appointed on or after July 1, 2015 . Tenure also requires Effective or Highly Effective ratings in at least three of the four preceding years, and an Ineffective rating in the final year makes the person ineligible	Ch. 56, L. 2015; Ed. Law §§2509, 2573, 3012, 3014
Random drug testing of any extracurricular participants is unconstitutional	Superseded. <i>Earls</i> (2002) upheld suspicionless random testing of students in competitive extracurricular activities , extending <i>Vernonia</i> . Neither authorizes testing the entire student body	<i>Earls</i> , 536 U.S. 822 (2002)
<i>Honig</i> : removal beyond 10 days is “only permitted with the parent’s permission ”	Pre-1997 framing. The framework is stay-put , a manifestation determination review within 10 school days of the decision to change placement, and up to 45 school days in an interim alternative educational setting for weapons, drugs or serious bodily injury — plus the judicial route <i>Honig</i> preserved	20 U.S.C. §1415(k); 8 NYCRR Part 201
The Lemon test governs Establishment Clause questions	<i>Kennedy v. Bremerton</i> (2022) said the Court had long ago abandoned Lemon , directing analysis by historical practices and understandings and by coercion	<i>Kennedy</i> , 597 U.S. 507 (2022)
Discipline for home-based websites or emails is an open question	Substantially answered. <i>Mahanoy</i> (2021) held schools have a diminished interest in off-campus speech and declined a bright-line rule, preserving authority over severe bullying and harassment, threats and security breaches	<i>Mahanoy</i> , 594 U.S. 180 (2021)
Student-led prayer at football games is “still a gray area ”	Resolved in 2000. <i>Santa Fe ISD v. Doe</i> held that student-led, student-initiated prayer over the PA under school policy violates the Establishment Clause	<i>Santa Fe</i> , 530 U.S. 290 (2000)
<i>Gebser</i> ’s standard applies to peer harassment unchanged	Imprecise. Davis (1999) is the peer case and adds elements: harassment severe, pervasive and objectively offensive enough to bar access to education, in a context the district substantially controls	<i>Davis</i> , 526 U.S. 629 (1999)
An item keys <i>Rowley</i> as if the suit was withdrawn or the parents won	The Court ruled for the district : FAPE requires some educational benefit , not maximization — a standard later raised (not replaced) by <i>Endrew F.</i> (2017)	<i>Rowley</i> , 458 U.S. 176 (1982); <i>Endrew F.</i> , 580 U.S. 386 (2017)
An item keys <i>Mt. Healthy</i> as the Court upholding the firing	Wrong. The speech was protected and the Court remanded , establishing the burden-shifting test : the employer prevails only by proving it would have taken the same action anyway	<i>Mt. Healthy</i> , 429 U.S. 274 (1977)
An item keys <i>Gebser</i> as the Court finding the district liable	The Court affirmed for the district: no Title IX damages unless an official with corrective authority had actual notice and was deliberately indifferent	<i>Gebser</i> , 524 U.S. 274 (1998)
Budget material with no property tax cap	The deck predates Chapter 97 of the Laws of 2011 . New York has had a tax levy limit since 2012–13 — the lesser of 2% or CPI , with statutory exclusions and a 60% supermajority override — made permanent in 2019	Ed. Law §2023-a
Pre-2011 contingency budget rules	A contingency budget may levy no more than the prior year’s levy — a 0% increase , with the administrative component capped and spending limited to ordinary contingent expenses	Ed. Law §2023
“ April 15 — BOE adopts both the Proposed and Contingency Budget”	Not the statutory sequence. The calendar keys off the hearing (7–14 days before the vote), the notice (no later than 6 days before), the Property Tax Report Card (24 days before) and the March 1 levy-limit filing; contingency is adopted after a defeat	Ed. Law §§1716, 2022, 2023, 2023-a
Alan Hevesi named as sitting State Comptroller	Hevesi resigned in December 2006 ; Thomas P. DiNapoli has been Comptroller since 2007 . The five-point accountability plan is substantively correct; the attribution is twenty years stale	Office of the State Comptroller

What circulating material says	What is actually true	Authority
STAR described as an exemption for all homeowners	Homeowners purchasing after the 2016 change generally receive the STAR credit rather than the exemption . confirm current	NYS Dept. of Taxation and Finance
<i>Bakke</i> presented as settled affirmative-action law	The landscape changed through <i>Grutter</i> (2003), <i>Fisher</i> (2016) and <i>Students for Fair Admissions</i> (2023) . Low K–12 salience, but do not cite <i>Bakke</i> as current doctrine	SFFA, 600 U.S. 181 (2023)
The 2024 Title IX Rule described as operative	Vacated nationwide January 9, 2025. OCR enforces Title IX under the 2020 Rule	<i>Tennessee v. Cardona</i> (E.D. Ky. 2025)

THE PATTERN BEHIND THE ERRORS

Almost every New York-specific error clusters in **2011–2015** — the tax cap and contingency rules (2011); the four-year probationary period, APPR and receivership (2015). Almost every case-law error is a holding the Supreme Court **changed after the notes were written** — *Davis* (1999), *Santa Fe* (2000), *Earls* (2002), *Endrew F.* (2017), *Mahanoy* (2021), *Kennedy* (2022), *Perez* (2023). Given an undated study file, those are the two places to look first.

ONE MORE HONESTY NOTE

Practitioner-written case notes and locally authored item banks are useful for **scenario style** — they model the “what would you do first” stem well. They are not authority. Where a practitioner note and a statute disagree, the statute wins; where a note and a Supreme Court holding disagree, the holding wins. Nothing here is legal advice, and district counsel plus the current Commissioner’s Regulations govern any actual decision.

PART V

Written-Assignment Playbook

The Work Product, Case Study, Management Problem Solving and Educational Program Analysis assignments — official directions and scoring criteria, a breakdown of every official strong response, the response frames circulating in prep courses (corrected against the real prompts), and two original practice tasks with model answers.

THE HALF OF THE EXAM MOST CANDIDATES NEVER REHEARSE

On both parts of the School District Leader assessment, the two written assignments are worth **approximately 50% of your total test score** — the same as all sixty multiple-choice items combined. One assignment on each part is worth **33% of a whole test by itself**. That single task outweighs an entire subarea of multiple choice. Everything on this page is aimed at the four task types you will meet across 103 and 104, and at the one thing the official scoring criteria actually reward: **fulfilling the charge, exactly, in the number the prompt asked for, with a reason attached to every claim.**

The four tasks at a glance

Two written assignments per part, four task types in total. Assignment One is always the short, 17% task and Assignment Two is always the long, 33% task — on Part One and Part Two alike.

4

Task types across 103 and 104

50%

Written share of each part's score

17 / 33

Weight: Assignment One / Assignment Two

3

Scoring criteria — not four, and not SBL's

Part	Assignment	Task type	Subarea it comes from	Words	% of part	Suggested minutes
One (103)	Assignment One	Work Product	I. Developing, Communicating, and Sustaining an Educational Vision	about 150–300	~17%	35
One (103)	Assignment Two	Case Study	II. Supervising Districtwide Change and Accountability	about 300–600	~33%	75
Two (104)	Assignment One	Management Problem Solving	II. Managing District Resources and Compliance	about 150–300	~17%	35
Two (104)	Assignment Two	Educational Program Analysis	I. Leading the District Educational Program	about 300–600	~33%	75
MULTI-DOCUMENT						

Task types, subareas, word ranges and percentages are the official ones, from the NYSED / Evaluation Systems School District Leader Preparation Guide (© 2009–2010) directions for the written assignments. The percentages are the guide's own "approximately." **The suggested minutes are ours, not official** — the exam gives you one four-hour block and allocates nothing per task.

THE ASYMMETRY THAT CATCHES PEOPLE ON PART TWO

On 103 the mapping is intuitive: the short task comes from Subarea I and the long task from Subarea II. **On 104 it inverts.** The long **33%** task — *Educational Program Analysis* — comes from **Subarea I, Leading the District Educational Program**. The short **17%** task — *Management Problem Solving* — comes from **Subarea II, Managing District Resources and Compliance**. Since Subarea I also carries the larger share of Part Two's multiple choice, **instructional programme leadership is roughly two-thirds of Part Two** and finance, facilities and compliance is roughly one-third. Candidates who spend their Part Two preparation on budget codes and building maintenance are studying the smaller half.

What “multi-document” means on 104

The official directions for Part Two say it plainly: “To view all parts of Assignment Two, you will need to click on buttons at the top of the screen labeled ‘**Document 1,**’ ‘**Document 2,**’ etc.” The official sample carries **five** documents — a memo, a test-results chart set, a newspaper article, a faculty experience and salary table, and a professional development schedule. If you write without clicking every tab, you are writing a partial answer to a task whose whole point is cross-document synthesis.

Order and review

Official: “You may complete the assignments in either order, and you may return to either assignment as time permits,” and “as with the multiple-choice questions, you may select written assignments for review later during the testing time.” So the four hours is one budget you control. There is a scroll bar — some assignments do not fit on one screen. Scroll to the bottom of the charge before you start counting obligations.

HOW LONG THE OFFICIAL MODELS ACTUALLY ARE

We counted the four published strong responses. **Work Product: about 335 words** against a stated 150–300. **Management Problem Solving: about 340** against the same range. **Case Study: about 630** against 300–600. **Educational Program Analysis: about 635** against 300–600. (Counts are ours and vary by a few words depending on how you treat the memo header and hyphenated line breaks.) Every one of them sits *slightly* over the ceiling. The lesson is not that length is free — it is that the ranges say “about,” the graders are scoring the charge and not the word count, and **a response that lands at or just past the top of the range is the shape of a published 4**. A 180-word Case Study is not.

[Official Part One sample assignments \(PDF\)](#) [Official Part Two sample assignments \(PDF\)](#)

How SDL scoring actually works

Three criteria, one four-point scale, two non-scores. Learn the words, because the words are what the grader is holding.

Criterion	Official wording, quoted exactly
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.”

Official, from “Criteria for Scoring the Response,” NYSED / Evaluation Systems School District Leader Preparation Guide. The identical three criteria appear in the directions for the written assignments on both Part One and Part Two.

THESE ARE NOT THE SBL CRITERIA – DO NOT CARRY THEM OVER

The School Building Leader assessment (109 / 110) is scored on **Completeness, Accuracy and Depth of Support and Understanding**. The School District Leader assessment is scored on **Purpose, Application of Content and Support**. They are different rubrics on different tests written years apart. If you are coming to SDL from an SBL course, an SBL study group or an SBL playbook, the single most expensive habit you can import is answering to a rubric that is not being used. The SDL criteria do not contain the words “completeness,” “accuracy” or “depth,” and there is no separate row for role understanding — role understanding is scored inside *Application of Content*.

The four-point score scale — official wording

Point	Score point description
4	“Reflects a thorough command of the relevant knowledge and skills.” Completely fulfills the purpose “by responding fully to the given task” · demonstrates “an accurate and highly effective application” · provides “ strong support with high-quality, relevant examples and/or sound reasoning.”
3	“Reflects a general command .” Generally fulfills the purpose “by responding to the given task” · a “ generally accurate and effective application” · support with “ some relevant examples and/or generally sound reasoning.”
2	“Reflects a partial command .” Partially fulfills the purpose “by responding in a limited way to the given task” · a “limited, partially accurate and partially effective application” · “ limited support with few examples and/or some flawed reasoning .”
1	“Reflects little or no command .” “ Fails to fulfill the purpose” · a “largely inaccurate and/or ineffective application” · “little or no support ... and/or seriously flawed reasoning .”
U	Unscorable . Official: a response “that is unrelated to the assigned topic, unreadable, written in a language other than English, or lacking a sufficient amount of original work to score ” is unscorable. That last clause is the one that bites — a response stitched together out of sentences lifted from the prompt and the exhibits is not original work.
B	Blank . Official: “If there is no response to the assignment, then the response will be considered blank.” A blank 33% task cannot be recovered by anything you do on the other half of the test.

Official, from the score scale printed in both the Part One and Part Two sample-assignment sections of the *School District Leader Preparation Guide*. Bolding is ours.

ONE MORE OFFICIAL SENTENCE WORTH MEMORISING

“Your responses will be evaluated on the criteria above, **not on writing ability**. However, your responses must be communicated clearly enough to permit valid judgment of your knowledge and skills.” Prose style is not scored. Clarity is, because an unclear sentence blocks the judgment. Short declarative sentences, one idea each, with a label in front, out-score elegant paragraphs every time. Also official: do not type your name anywhere in the answer box, and you may not use reference materials.

The practical translation — what a 4 does that a 3 does not

The score-point language is comparative and vague on purpose. Here is what the difference looks like on the page, criterion by criterion, read off the published models and their official evaluations.

Criterion	A 3 looks like this	A 4 looks like this
PURPOSE	Every bullet of the charge is touched, but one of them is answered in a clause rather than a block. The prompt asked for three actions and the response argues two at length and mentions a third. A number is missed by one.	Every bullet has its own visible, countable block, in the prompt's own order, and every stated number is hit exactly or over . Where the prompt says "and explain why," the explanation is a separate sentence that begins with a because-word, so the grader cannot fail to find it.
APPLICATION OF CONTENT	Correct but generic district practice. "I would form a committee." "I would improve communication." "I would provide professional development." Nothing in the sentence could only have been written by a superintendent.	The same idea carrying district machinery: who is on the committee, what its charge is, what data it uses, what policy-level product it delivers, and which office or body it reports to. The official models name the district governing body, BOCES, the district business leader, a districtwide protocol, a comprehensive needs assessment, mentoring with release time. Nothing there is exotic. It is just specified.
SUPPORT	Effectiveness is asserted. "This will be effective because it will improve student achievement." The reason restates the goal instead of explaining a mechanism.	A causal chain plus a concrete instance. The official Educational Program Analysis model does both in one move: mentoring → supported teachers → skill development → visible student achievement → job satisfaction → lower turnover, <i>and</i> names what mentoring concretely involves (weekly meetings, reciprocal classroom observations, release time).

THE "AND/OR" TRAP IN THE SUPPORT CRITERION

SUPPORT reads "appropriate examples **and/or** sound reasoning." Read strictly, either one can support a response. But the official evaluation of every single one of the four published strong responses says both are present — "Both relevant examples and sound reasoning are present in this response," "The response contains both sound reasoning and relevant examples," "Relevant examples and sound reasoning are present," "ample evidence of both sound reasoning and support through examples." Treat the "or" as a floor and the "and" as the target. **Give a reason and then give a for-example.**

CORROBORATION FROM THE REST OF THE PEARSON SUPERINTENDENT FAMILY

The same three-criterion architecture — Purpose, Application of Content, Support — and the same four-point thorough / general / limited / very weak ladder appear on other Evaluation Systems superintendent assessments, including the Illinois Superintendent field. Their published strong responses win on exactly the same behaviours: answering each charge in order, using every exhibit supplied, and closing with a rationale. That is useful confirmation that these are house rules of the scoring system, not quirks of one 2010 sample. It is **not** a reason to study another state's content — only its response shape.

Four skeletons, one per task type

Each block gives you the official charge (quoted, so you can count it), our response skeleton derived from that charge, and the practitioner frame circulating in preparation courses — with its errors marked. **Always count from the prompt in front of you, never from a memorised frame.** Prompts vary; the counts in the official samples are the counts in the official samples, not a guarantee.

READ THIS BEFORE YOU USE ANY TEMPLATE

The four frames reproduced below are **practitioner material** — response frames circulating in SDL preparation courses. They are **not** official NYSED or Pearson material, they carry no rubric, no sample response and no timing guidance, and at least one of them is **numerically wrong** against the official sample prompt. They are worth reproducing because their underlying move — name it, justify it, count it — is exactly right. They are worth correcting because a candidate who follows the Case Study frame literally will supply **two** actions where the official sample assignment asks for **three**, and lose PURPOSE on a 33% task.

PART ONE · ASSIGNMENT ONE

Work Product

150–300 WORDS · ~17% · SUBAREA I

You are given a district situation and told to **produce a document** — in the official sample, a memo to a stakeholder team you chair. The task type is named “Work Product” because the thing being scored is a real artefact a superintendent would actually send. There is an audience on the page. Write to it.

The official charge — sample Work Product assignment

Write a memo of about 150–300 words to the members of the team in which you: • explain **why it is important** for the district to develop a plan ... **at this time**; • describe **two key issues** for the team to consider ..., and **explain why each issue is important**; and • describe the **appropriate role for you, as superintendent**, to play in helping **develop and implement** the team’s plan.

Official, NYSED / Evaluation Systems *School District Leader Preparation Guide*. Bolding ours.

COUNT IT: SEVEN GRADED PIECES

One why-now · issue A · why A matters · issue B · why B matters · your role in **developing** · your role in **implementing**. The last bullet reads as one obligation and is two. Most lost PURPOSE points on this task come from writing a role paragraph that covers only the planning phase.

Our skeleton

Re: a *subject line naming the document’s topic* **1. Why now.** Two or three sentences. First the general principle. Then the district-specific trigger, taken from the scenario — a demographic shift, an uneven practice, a compliance notice. Name the *at this time*. **2. Issue one.** The first key issue for the team is _____. It is important because _____. For example, _____. **3. Issue two.** A second key issue is _____. It is important because _____. For example, _____. **4. My role in developing.** As superintendent and chair I will _____, _____ and _____ while the team builds the plan. **5. My role in implementing.** Once the plan is adopted I will _____ and _____. **Close.** One sentence addressed to the team, in the plural: *by working together, we can* _____.

The circulating practitioner frame

Practitioner material — not official. Transcribed as it circulates. It is important(copy from prompt) because _____. (2 to 3 sentences) One issue is _____. It is important because _____. The second issue is _____. It is important because _____. As superintendent, I will _____ to develop the plan. As superintendent, I will _____ to implement the plan.

What the frame gets right

- ✓ It splits the role bullet into **develop** and **implement** — a sharper reading of the charge than most candidates manage unprompted.
- ✓ It welds “It is important because” onto every issue, which is literally the second half of the second charge bullet.
- ✓ It counts. Two issues, two justifications, two role sentences.

Corrections

- ✗ “Copy from prompt” is dangerous advice. The official directions require “your original work, written in your own words, and not copied or paraphrased from some other work,” and a response “lacking a sufficient

amount of original work to score” is **unscorable**. Restate the charge in your own words in one clause and move on.

- ✗ **The frame has no audience and no document format.** The task said *write a memo to the members of the team*. The official model opens with a **Re:** line and closes addressing the team. Neither costs you twenty words.
- ✗ **The frame has no “at this time.”** The charge asks why the plan matters *now*, which means a fact from the scenario has to appear in your first paragraph.
- ✗ **No for-examples.** The frame justifies but never illustrates, and the official evaluation of the strong response praises it for exactly that illustration.

PART ONE · ASSIGNMENT TWO

Case Study

300–600 WORDS · ~33% · SUBAREA II

A narrative of something a superintendent already did, usually badly by the end. You judge the past and then fix the future. The official prompt tells you the narrative is complete: “The case study provides information about **all relevant activities** that occurred in the situation described.” That sentence is permission — you are not expected to ask for more information, and “I would first gather more data” is a weak answer here in a way it would not be on an SBL task.

The official charge — sample Case Study assignment

Citing specific examples from the information provided, write a response of about 300–600 words in which you: • describe what the superintendent **did well** in this situation; • describe what the superintendent **did poorly or failed to do** in this situation; and • identify and discuss **three important actions** that the superintendent **should take** to resolve this situation, and **explain why each of these actions is likely to be effective**.

Official. Bolding ours.

COUNT IT: TEN GRADED PIECES, AND ONE HARD NUMBER

The first two bullets carry **no number** — the official strong response supplies **four** things done well and two things done poorly, and the official evaluation counts them approvingly. The third bullet carries a hard number: **three** actions, each with its own **why it is likely to be effective**. That is 3 actions + 3 justifications = 6, plus at least 2 strengths and 2 weaknesses = **ten**. Write three or four strengths and two or three weaknesses; write **exactly three** actions, numbered by first / second / finally so the grader can count them without effort.

Our skeleton

¶1 — **What was done well.** *Retrospective. Past tense.* Dr. _____ engaged in several appropriate actions. **First**, she _____ — and that matters because _____. **She also** _____. **In addition**, she _____. **Finally**, she _____. *Three or four, each with a clause of reasoning, each traceable to a line in the case.* ¶2 — **What was done poorly or not at all.** *Still retrospective. This is the ONLY place “should have” belongs.* She also exhibited several problematic behaviours. One problem was _____. She **should have** _____ rather than _____. She was also _____, and she **failed to** _____. ¶3–5 — **Three actions.** *Prospective. Present and future tense only.* **First**, she **should** _____. This will _____, which is likely to be effective because _____. **Second**, she **should** _____. This will _____, because _____. **Finally**, once _____, she **should** _____. This will _____, because _____. *Sequence them. Action three should depend on action one having happened.*

The circulating practitioner frame

Practitioner material — not official. Transcribed as it circulates. The superintendent did the following things well in this situation: (list 2 to 3 things) The superintendent did the following things poorly or failed to do: (list 2 to 3 things) One

important action is _____. This action is effective because _____. A second important action is _____. This action is effective because _____. (All actions **MUST** be in the future. There are **NO SHOULD HAVES**)

CORRECTION 1 – THE COUNT IS WRONG, AND IT IS ON THE 33% TASK

The frame gives you slots for **two** actions. The official sample Case Study assignment asks for **three important actions**, and the official evaluation of the strong response explicitly credits it for “a discussion of **three** suggested actions ... and their potential efficacy.” A response with two actions has, in the language of the scale, “partially fulfil[led] the purpose of the assignment by responding in a limited way to the given task” — a **2** on PURPOSE, on the task worth a third of the test. **Count from the prompt on your screen. Write the number on your notebooklet before you type a word.**

CORRECTION 2 – THE “NO SHOULD HAVES” RULE IS RIGHT, AND IT IS SCOPED

The frame’s strongest instruction is *All actions MUST be in the future. There are NO SHOULD HAVES.* That is correct **for the action section**, and it is the single most useful sentence in the circulating material. But read literally as a ban on the phrase everywhere, it is wrong: the official strong response uses it in the **weakness** paragraph, where it is exactly the right verb — “Dr. Jacobson **should have** considered the value of creating and implementing new districtwide policies rather than targeting one building for change.” Then in the action section it switches cleanly to prospective: “she **should communicate** ...,” “**should issue** a clarifying statement ...,” “**should request** that each principal develop a plan ...” **Past-perfect in paragraph two; simple future in paragraphs three through five.** Watch the auxiliary verb and you have the rule.

Further corrections

- ✗ **“List 2 to 3 things” undersells the strengths section.** The published model gives four, and the evaluation counts all four. Where the prompt sets no number, generosity is free.
- ✗ **The frame has no citation slot.** The charge opens “citing specific examples from the information provided.” Every strength, every weakness and every action should be traceable to a named person, quotation or event in the case.
- ✗ **“This action is effective because” understates it.** The charge asks why each action is *likely to be effective* — a prediction with a mechanism, not a label.
- ✗ **A bare list is not a description.** The charge says *describe* and *discuss*. Write sentences.

PART TWO · ASSIGNMENT ONE

Management Problem Solving

150–300 WORDS · ~17% · SUBAREA II

An operational failure — in the official sample, grant funds spent outside their purpose because nobody was monitoring grants district-wide. You are not asked to judge anyone and you are not asked for three actions. You are asked for **two issues, one strategy, one justification**. It is the narrowest charge of the four, and the easiest to over-answer.

The official charge — sample Management Problem Solving assignment

Write a response of about 150–300 words in which you: • describe **two important issues** that Dr. _____ should **consider when planning development of a system** to improve management of _____ in this district; • describe **one strategy** for improving management of _____ in this district; and • **explain why this strategy is likely to be effective**.

Official. Bolding ours.

COUNT IT: FOUR GRADED PIECES

Issue one · issue two · one strategy · one justification. **One** strategy. Offering three strategies here does not earn extra PURPOSE credit; it spends the word budget you needed for describing the strategy in enough operational detail to earn APPLICATION OF CONTENT. Note also the exact phrasing of the first bullet: the issues are things to consider *when planning development of a system* — design considerations, not a restatement of the problem.

Our skeleton

1. Issue one. One important issue to consider is _____. *Then two or three sentences of description: what the system component would have to include, who would be accountable for it, what it would produce.* **2. Issue two.** A second, related issue is _____. *Same treatment. Then one sentence connecting the two issues back to the specific facts of the scenario — the volume, the number of people involved, the likelihood of recurrence.* **3. The strategy.** One strategy for improving _____ in this district would be to _____. *Name the actors by role, including anyone outside the district you would draw on (BOCES, the district business official, counsel, the external auditor). Then break the strategy into its parts — component one would address _____; component two would address _____; component three would address _____.* **4. Why it works.** This strategy would be effective because _____. *Two reasons is stronger than one: a capability reason (people will now have the information and the contacts) and an accountability reason (it signals that compliance is taken seriously and that non-compliance will be addressed).*

The circulating practitioner frame

Practitioner material — not official. Transcribed as it circulates. One important issue to consider is: “How? A second important issue is: “How? One strategy to improve management is _____. This strategy would be effective because _____.

What the frame gets right

- ✓ **The counts are correct** — two issues, one strategy, one justification. This is the one frame that matches its official prompt numerically.
- ✓ “This strategy would be effective because” is almost word-for-word the official model’s closing sentence.

Corrections

- ✗ **The “How ...?” question format is not what this task’s official model does.** The charge says *describe* two issues. The published strong response writes them as declaratives — “the **need to** create a comprehensive system of oversight and management,” “the **need to** provide all involved staff with training.” The question form is not forbidden in itself — the official *Work Product* model does phrase its two issues as questions — but there every question is immediately followed by why it matters and a for-example. A question on its own names a topic; it does not describe an issue. Writing the issue as a question and stopping is how a 4 becomes a 2 here.
- ✗ **The frame gives one line per issue.** “Describe” means the issue needs body — the official model gives each issue a full paragraph.

- ✗ **Nothing prompts you outside the district.** The official model reaches for **BOCES** and the district business leader, and the official evaluation specifically credits “knowledge of appropriate contacts related to this concept (e.g., BOCES).” On a New York district-leader exam, knowing who you can call is content knowledge.

PART TWO · ASSIGNMENT TWO

Educational Program Analysis

300–600 WORDS · ~33% · SUBAREA I · MULTI-DOCUMENT

The heaviest task on either part: several documents behind tabs, and a charge with four bullets and eight obligations. It is also the most mechanical, which makes it the most rehearsable. The whole task is **one strength and two weaknesses, each carrying a strategy, each strategy carrying a reason, every claim carrying a document number.**

The official charge — sample Educational Program Analysis assignment

Read the **five district documents** on the pages that follow. **Citing specific evidence from the information provided**, write a response of about 300–600 words in which you: • identify **one significant strength** of the district’s educational program, and describe a **strategy for building on this strength** to improve the district’s educational program; • identify **two significant weaknesses** of the district’s educational program; • for **each** of the weaknesses you have identified, describe **one strategy** to address that weakness; and • **explain why each of these strategies is likely to be effective** in improving the district’s educational program.

Official. Bolding ours.

COUNT IT: EIGHT GRADED PIECES

One strength · one build-on strategy · weakness one · weakness two · strategy for weakness one · strategy for weakness two · why strategy one works · why strategy two works. The fourth bullet says “each of these strategies,” which is ambiguous about whether the build-on strategy needs a justification too. **Justify all three.** One extra sentence removes the ambiguity in your favour, and the risk runs entirely one way.

THE WORD “SIGNIFICANT” IS DOING WORK

Both the strength and the weaknesses must be **significant** — district-level, evidenced across more than one document if possible, and consequential for students. A strength that appears in one sentence of one memo is not significant. In the official model the strength is community, educator and parent/guardian support and involvement, and it is cited to **two** documents at once.

Our skeleton

Before you write — four minutes with the tabs. Open every document. On your notebooklet write one line per document: what it is, and the one number or quotation you would use from it. Then choose claims that let you cite two documents. **1. Strength.** One significant strength of the district’s educational program is _____. (**Documents #_ and #_**). For example, _____ (Document #_). **2. Strategy to build on it.** One strategy for building on this strength is to _____. *Expand something that already exists rather than inventing something new — a committee that is already meeting, a school that is already succeeding, a partnership already in place.* This would be effective because _____. **3. Weakness one.** One significant weakness is _____. (**Documents #_ and #_**). *Quantify it. The number is the claim.* **4. Strategy for weakness one.** To address this, the district should _____. *Specify: who runs it, who participates, on what schedule, with what release time or resource.* **5. Why it works.** This strategy is likely to be effective because _____, which in turn _____, which should _____. *A chain, not a label.* **6. Weakness two.** A second significant weakness is _____ (**Document #_**). *Choose a weakness of a different kind from the first — if the first was about people, make the second about programme, data or curriculum. Two versions of the same complaint reads as one weakness.* **7. Strategy for weakness**

two. _____. **8. Why it works.** _____, and its effect can be measured by _____. *Naming the measure is a cheap, strong finish.*

The circulating practitioner frame

Practitioner material — not official. Transcribed as it circulates. One strength is _____. A strategy to build on this strength is _____. One significant weakness in the educational program is _____. A second significant weakness in the educational program is _____. A strategy to address the first weakness is _____. This strategy is effective because _____. A strategy to address the second weakness is _____. This strategy is effective because _____.

What the frame gets right

- ✓ **Its counts match the official charge exactly** — one strength, one build-on strategy, two weaknesses, two strategies, two justifications.
- ✓ It captures the asymmetry candidates most often miss: **one** strength but **two** weaknesses. Writing two strengths is a symmetry reflex that costs you words and buys nothing.

Corrections

- ✗ **No evidence slot.** The charge's first instruction is "citing specific evidence from the information provided," and the published strong response puts a document number in parentheses in its first sentence and keeps doing it. A response with no document citations cannot earn a 4 on this task no matter how sensible its strategies are.
- ✗ **It never justifies the build-on strategy.** Add a because-clause there too.
- ✗ **Its order splits weaknesses from their strategies.** Keep each weakness with its own strategy and justification, as the official model does — weakness, strategy, why; weakness, strategy, why. The grader is looking for pairs.
- ✗ **"Is effective" is the wrong tense and the wrong claim.** The charge asks why it is *likely to be effective in improving the district's educational program*. Land the reason on **student learning**, not on process satisfaction.

Worked examples — what the official strong responses actually did

Four official sample assignments, four official strong responses, four official evaluations. Below, each scenario is **summarised** and each strong response is broken down paragraph by paragraph against the three criteria. The full scenarios, the complete responses and the complete evaluations are in the free official PDFs — read them at least once in full before test day.

WORKED EXAMPLE 1

Work Product — the immigrant-family engagement plan

103 · ASSIGNMENT ONE · ~335 WORDS IN THE OFFICIAL MODEL

THE SCENARIO, SUMMARISED

You are a new superintendent. Over ten years the district's population of students from recently immigrated families has grown gradually to **nearly 15 percent**. Schools have welcomed newcomers, hired language tutors and provided translators *whenever possible*; one school found a bilingual volunteer for a few years. Provision is therefore real but **uneven and school-by-school**. You have decided it is time for a proactive, districtwide approach, and you have convened a broadly representative team — district administrators, faculty and staff from each school, parents and

guardians, community members, and immigrant parents, guardians and community representatives — which **you will chair**. The task is a memo to that team. (Full text: official Part One sample-assignments PDF.)

Paragraph	What it does	Criterion it feeds
Re: line “A plan for engaging immigrant families in our schools”	Turns the answer into the document that was requested. Eight words. The charge said <i>write a memo</i> , and this is the cheapest possible proof that you noticed.	PURPOSE — and the audience discipline that runs through APPLICATION OF CONTENT.
Opening paragraph — why now	General principle first (“Parental participation in education is a critical aspect of children’s academic success”), then the district fact (a large immigrant student population), then the at-this-time argument built straight out of the scenario: “Some, but not all, district schools have already provided interpreters/translators and language tutors” — therefore a districtwide plan is what ensures needs are met “consistently and effectively.”	PURPOSE (bullet 1) · SUPPORT (sound reasoning)
Signpost line “Two key issues to consider when devising such a plan:”	A one-line header. It tells the grader exactly where bullet 2 begins and announces the count. Free PURPOSE insurance.	PURPOSE
Issue one — what has worked	States the issue as a question (which strategies for disseminating information have been most effective?), then supplies the why and a concrete for example : if families who received notices in both their native language and English were more likely to attend school functions, translating more communications may be an effective first step districtwide.	PURPOSE (2a + 2b) · SUPPORT (example)
Issue two — what resources exist	Same shape. Data-gathering on financial parameters, community organisations and untapped resources, then a genuinely inventive example: surveying the school and business communities for employees’ proficiency in other languages to build a translator pool.	PURPOSE (2a + 2b) · APPLICATION OF CONTENT · SUPPORT
Role paragraph	Five distinct role actions, all of them things only the superintendent can do: facilitate the problem-solving process, promote consensus, present the plan to the school board and local community , ensure the ideas of immigrant families are incorporated, and identify and provide resources — “both for the team during the planning process and for staff during the implementation phase.” That last clause is where the develop-and-implement half of the charge gets satisfied, in eleven words.	PURPOSE (bullet 3, both halves) · APPLICATION OF CONTENT (governance, collaboration, resourcing)
Closing sentence	“By working together, we can support the involvement of immigrant families in their children’s education.” Addressed to the team, in the plural. It closes the document as a memo rather than trailing off as an essay.	APPLICATION OF CONTENT (communication with a stakeholder team)

OFFICIAL EVALUATION – QUOTED

On PURPOSE: “All parts of the charge are completed within the response,” and it lists them back — the importance argument (“the value of parental participation, strategies in place at only some schools”), the two issues (“strategies that have proven to be effective, and relevant resources”) with why each matters, and the role (“facilitating the problem-solving process, promoting consensus, presenting the plan, ensuring input of immigrant families, providing resources”).

On APPLICATION OF CONTENT: the response “demonstrates knowledge of how to effectively communicate with a

team of stakeholders in writing,” and shows “a plan to use consensus building and an understanding of the need to communicate information to the community and district governing body.”

On SUPPORT: “Both relevant examples and sound reasoning are present in this response,” naming the native-language notices and the local-business language proficiency as the examples.

WHAT TO STEAL FROM THIS ONE

The uneven-provision argument. The scenario says the schools have done a decent job. A weak response therefore struggles to explain why a plan is needed *at this time*. The model’s move is to convert “some schools do this well” into the problem itself: **inconsistency across buildings is a district-level problem and only the district can fix it**. That reframing is the whole Work Product task in one sentence, and it transfers to almost any prompt of this type.

WORKED EXAMPLE 2

Case Study — two middle schools, two cultures

103 · ASSIGNMENT TWO · ~630 WORDS IN THE OFFICIAL MODEL

THE SCENARIO, SUMMARISED

Dr. Rene Jacobson is the new superintendent of the Carson School District. A middle school mathematics teacher, Mr. Kowalski, asks to see her: after a year’s leave he was reassigned from Leonard Middle School to Clayton Middle School and is unhappy, because Leonard let teachers cover for one another and use preparation periods for personal business without notifying the office, while Clayton runs sign-in/sign-out, computerised attendance, absence request forms, and protected team planning periods that teachers may not miss. Investigating, Dr. Jacobson finds two genuinely different school cultures, defended by two principals with opposite philosophies of professional development — Clayton’s requires monthly sessions and runs annual and three-year plans; Leonard’s requires nothing beyond legal mandates. Leonard’s test scores are lower. She praises the Clayton principal, concludes that Leonard’s must change, and decides to **force** change at Leonard. Meeting resistance, she tells both principals — on the afternoon before a governing-body meeting — that she is considering **swapping their assignments**. The news spreads, and by the meeting dozens of staff and parents from both schools are angry enough to ask the governing body to intervene. *(Full text: official Part One sample-assignments PDF.)*

Paragraph	What it does	Criterion it feeds
¶1 — did well FOUR ITEMS	(1) Made herself available to Mr. Kowalski and listened — “a superintendent’s accessibility and approachability to faculty members is a key element of successful employee management.” (2) Investigated before acting. (3) Met the principals individually , which let each speak candidly “without feeling the need to defend themselves to a peer.” (4) Showed commitment to academic excellence across all schools. Every item carries a reason. Four strengths where the practitioner frame would have offered two.	PURPOSE (bullet 1) · SUPPORT (reasoning attached to each judgement)
¶2 — did poorly WHERE “SHOULD HAVE” LIVES	Two structural failures, not a list of complaints. First, she focused on building-level policy in the absence of district-level policy — “In the absence of established district-level procedures and expectations, personnel at each building had established their own,” so she “ should have considered the value of creating and implementing new districtwide policies rather than targeting one building for change. ” Second, she was impulsive and acted out of frustration in floating the principal swap, and “her approach to forcing change created a hostile situation.”	PURPOSE (bullet 2) · APPLICATION OF CONTENT (change management, district vs. building authority)
¶3 — action one	Communicate with the district governing body about the need for districtwide professional development standards, expectations and policies. Why it works, three ways: secures governing-body support, signals to all stakeholders how seriously the superintendent takes staff development, and “ may also help reduce the Leonard principal’s sense of being singled out for criticism. ” That third clause is the one that reads as a real superintendent talking.	PURPOSE (bullet 3) · APPLICATION OF CONTENT (governance) · SUPPORT
¶4 — action two	Issue a clarifying statement that the two principals stay where they are, plus a commitment to districtwide goals and policies, plus a brief outline of a districtwide stakeholder committee to write the professional development protocol. Why it works: dispels rumours, and the collaborative approach “could enhance problem solving, increase acceptance of change, and promote a general sense of commitment to the larger goal of student achievement.” Note that this action directly repairs the specific damage described in the last paragraph of the case.	PURPOSE · APPLICATION OF CONTENT (communication, change) · SUPPORT
¶5 — action three	Once districtwide policy exists , require each principal to produce a building professional development plan aligned to it. Why it works: gives principals a way to demonstrate commitment, establishes accountability for results, and lets the superintendent monitor progress, ensure adherence and report to the governing body. It is sequenced — it cannot happen until action one has happened. Three actions that form a sequence read as a plan; three parallel actions read as a list.	PURPOSE · APPLICATION OF CONTENT (accountability) · SUPPORT

OFFICIAL EVALUATION – QUOTED

On PURPOSE, the evaluation counts: “The response describes **four** examples of what the superintendent did well,” and “the response includes a discussion of **three** suggested actions ... and their potential efficacy.”

On APPLICATION OF CONTENT: the response shows understanding of effective methods for addressing problems (“begin by gathering relevant information, promote stakeholder commitment to working toward solutions”) and for implementing change — explicitly, “**recognizing that a top-down decision to change positions of principals is not an**

effective way to initiate change, “recognizing the importance of involving stakeholders in the change process,” and “the value of establishing districtwide policies and procedures to facilitate change and help establish accountability.”

On SUPPORT: “Reasons are provided for the evaluation of the superintendent’s good and poor choices,” and it singles out the individual-meetings justification and the contents of the clarifying statement.

THE TRAP THIS CASE IS BUILT TO SPRING

The scenario invites you to take a side: Clayton’s principal runs a tighter, higher-scoring school, and Dr. Jacobson herself concludes he “takes the academic achievement of students more seriously.” A response that agrees with her — that recommends making Leonard more like Clayton — has adopted the superintendent’s error as its own answer. **The scored insight is that this is a district-policy vacuum, not a bad principal.** Two buildings wrote their own rules because the district never wrote any. Every one of the three official actions is a district-level instrument: governing-body engagement, a districtwide communication, a districtwide committee producing a districtwide protocol, and only then building-level plans aligned to it. **When a case study presents a building problem, look for the district-level absence behind it.**

WORKED EXAMPLE 3

Management Problem Solving — the unmonitored grants

104 · ASSIGNMENT ONE · ~340 WORDS IN THE OFFICIAL MODEL

THE SCENARIO, SUMMARISED

Dr. Freed is a new superintendent. After five lean years, administrators and teachers across his district became very successful at winning grants — some a few hundred dollars, some large enough to fund significant professional development. Then a notification arrives: a grant payment is being **withheld for improper use**, because funds earmarked for mathematics professional development paid for a student field trip. The grant is one of three written and administered by a middle school principal, Mr. Haigh, who acknowledges the error immediately, offers to file the amendment, and notes that grant work adds to his staff’s workload but has generated real revenue. Looking further, Dr. Freed finds Mr. Haigh is **not the only principal running several grants**, that the district business manager **has not been monitoring them at all** because they are administered all over the district, and that fiscal accountability and programme protocol are inconsistent. He does not want to dampen the enthusiasm of grant writers or lose the revenue, and concludes the district needs a system. *(Full text: official Part Two sample-assignments PDF.)*

Paragraph	What it does	Criterion it feeds
¶1 — issue one	“The need to create a comprehensive system of oversight and management of the district’s entire grant system.” Then two operational specifics that turn a platitude into a design: a knowledgeable programme administrator heading it and a well-organised programme handbook given to every participating staff member . Declarative, not a question. Named, then specified.	PURPOSE (bullet 1a) · APPLICATION OF CONTENT (internal control)
¶2 — issue two + the link back	“A second, related issue” — training for all involved staff, covering compliance with restrictions on specific funds and the importance of reporting requirements. Then the paragraph earns its keep by returning to the scenario: because the programme is popular and more than one principal is running several grants, errors like Mr. Haigh’s will recur without oversight plus systematic training. That sentence is the reasoning that makes both issues <i>important</i> rather than merely true.	PURPOSE (bullet 1b) · SUPPORT (reasoning tied to the facts given)
¶3 — the one strategy	Ask the local BOCES director or assistant director to collaborate with the district business leader to build and run a series of training sessions — then three named sessions: purpose and intent of grant-funded initiatives (mandatory for all involved); management and compliance, with allowable expenditures, budget and object codes, and fiscal accounting ; and reporting of funding use and outcomes, technical-assistance contacts, and documentation organised for the business leader and in case of an audit . One strategy, three components, real vocabulary.	APPLICATION OF CONTENT — this paragraph is where the 4 is won
¶4 — why it works	Two reasons, of two different kinds. Capability: staff will have the information they need, including where to direct questions. Accountability and culture: it communicates that “compliance with system requirements is taken very seriously and that individuals who demonstrate noncompliance will be held accountable.”	PURPOSE (bullet 3) · SUPPORT

OFFICIAL EVALUATION – QUOTED

On APPLICATION OF CONTENT: the response shows “evidence of understanding of the management and compliance issues involved in grant funding, as well as **knowledge of appropriate contacts related to this concept (e.g., BOCES),**” and understanding of “the elements of training that will be required and the responsibilities of all involved (e.g., use of appropriate codes, documentation).”

On SUPPORT: “there is reasoning for providing a comprehensive system of management and training for personnel at all levels (i.e., **to help prevent errors such as Mr. Haigh’s**). Examples of components of training for grant compliance and management are provided (e.g., contacts for technical assistance, documentation for auditing).”

What to steal

- **Nobody gets disciplined.** Mr. Haigh admitted the error and offered to fix it; the response never proposes action against him. The charge was about building a system, and the response stays on the charge.
- **BOCES.** A single accurate New York structural reference — a Board of Cooperative Educational Services offering shared services a single district would struggle to staff — carried an entire sentence of the official evaluation.
- **Object codes, allowable expenditures, audit documentation.** Three phrases of genuine business-office vocabulary. This is what “highly effective application” looks like in practice.

The over-answer risk

This task tempts you into a list of five reforms: centralise grant applications, require pre-approval, hire a grants coordinator, restructure the business office, add an internal audit. All defensible; all outside the charge, which asked for **one** strategy. The word budget is 150–300. Spend it on describing one strategy in enough operational detail that the grader can see you have actually run one, and on the two-part reason at the end.

WORKED EXAMPLE 4

Educational Program Analysis – the Fowler middle schools

104 · ASSIGNMENT TWO · ~635 WORDS IN THE OFFICIAL MODEL · FIVE DOCUMENTS

THE SCENARIO AND DOCUMENTS, SUMMARISED

You are the new superintendent of the Fowler School District, a large district with strong community and parent/guardian support. **Document 1**, a memo from the assistant superintendent, gives the history: eleven years ago sixth graders moved from the elementary schools to the middle schools on a seven-period junior-high schedule; five years ago, after the middle school principals' advisory group reported that sixth graders were struggling with the transition, the district created a "transition year" using two-teacher teams. **Document 2** charts state test results: grade 4 English at or above the district's comparison groups, but **grade 8 English at 71%, 74% and 78% over three years — below both the state and similar districts**, with much lower results for Limited English Proficient students. **Document 3**, a newspaper report on the District Middle School Study Committee (parents and educators), finds middle school achievement still below expectations, names "inadequate recruiting, hiring, and training of middle school staff," and quotes the committee: "A stable, experienced staff, committed to middle school teaching, continues as a high-priority need." **Document 4** is the faculty table: of **458** middle school teachers, **47** are beginning and **180** have 2–5 years' experience, and average middle school salary is **\$36,000** against \$54,000 at the high school and \$47,000 at elementary. **Document 5** is last year's districtwide professional development schedule: five sessions — restraint training and CPR, differentiated instruction (lecture and video), collaborative learning (lecture, presenter TBA), an early-retirement panel, and a data-processing system walkthrough. *(Full text and the actual charts: official Part Two sample-assignments PDF.)*

Move	What the official model does	Criterion it feeds
Strength	“Community, educator, and parent/guardian support and involvement (Documents #1 and #3)” — cited to two documents in its first sentence, then illustrated twice: staff openness to new transition strategies (Doc 1) and parents/guardians actively serving on the Study Committee (Doc 3).	PURPOSE · SUPPORT (evidence citation)
Build-on strategy	Expand the role of a body that already exists. The Middle School Study Committee has already used shared decision-making and data to identify problems; give it a broader mandate to explore, identify and implement solutions, grow its membership, and split it into subcommittees with named remits — teacher retention, professional development, meeting the needs of English language learners. Nothing new is invented.	APPLICATION OF CONTENT (shared decision-making, capacity)
Weakness one	High middle school teacher turnover and its likely effect on achievement (Documents #3 and #4), quantified: “ Approximately half of the middle school staff have five or fewer years of experience ” (Doc 4). The number <i>is</i> the claim.	PURPOSE · SUPPORT
Strategy one + why	A mentoring programme — and then it specifies: volunteer experienced middle school teachers paired with new ones for support, feedback and coaching, with administrator-provided release time , weekly mentor meetings and reciprocal classroom observations . The reason is a chain, not a label: mentoring targets specific teacher behaviours → affects student achievement and test scores → supported teachers who see students achieving are more successful and more satisfied → satisfaction reduces turnover.	APPLICATION OF CONTENT · SUPPORT (this is the model’s best paragraph)
Weakness two	Low grade 8 English achievement, quantified and contrasted : “consistent low performance (i.e., 71–78% passing) over a three-year period (Document #2) ... lower than both statewide scores and scores of similar school districts. In contrast, the fourth-grade English scores are better than the scores of similar school districts during the same three-year period.” The contrast is what makes it a <i>middle school programme</i> weakness rather than a district-wide one.	PURPOSE · APPLICATION OF CONTENT (data interpretation) · SUPPORT
Strategy two + why	A comprehensive needs assessment of the middle school educational programme, run by the Study Committee or one like it, using state test data plus questionnaires and interviews, examining curriculum and instruction and also leadership, resources and climate. The justification runs longest of all: stakeholders + data → understanding of causes → a worked illustration (test data may show grade 8 struggled with particular concepts → examine whether the curriculum covers them, and how deeply) → decisions (textbook alignment to standards, professional development in research-based ELA strategies) → and finally “ the effectiveness of plans for improvement can then be measured by analyzing future performance on state tests for eighth graders. ”	APPLICATION OF CONTENT · SUPPORT

OFFICIAL EVALUATION – QUOTED

On APPLICATION OF CONTENT: “There is evidence of content knowledge within the field related to **proper interpretation of data provided in documents** (e.g., staff turnover and possible causes, comparative test results and their meaning) and the importance of **data-driven planning** ... In addition, there is an understanding of the importance of providing teachers with support and of the **relationships among job satisfaction, staff development, student achievement, and teacher retention.**”

On SUPPORT: “ample evidence of both sound reasoning and support through examples ... including what an analysis of the state test data may reveal (e.g., inadequate coverage of curriculum concepts), how the analysis of results can be used to develop an improvement plan, and types of interactions required for a successful mentoring program (e.g., weekly meetings between new teachers and their mentors, classroom observations).”

TWO OBSERVATIONS OF OURS, NOT THE EVALUATION'S

First: the model does not use every document. It cites Documents 1, 2, 3 and 4 and never mentions Document 5, the professional development schedule — a schedule with no middle-school content on it at all, in a district whose own study committee named training of middle school staff as a key problem. It still scored a 4. The rule is not “cite everything”; it is **cite what you claim**. But a response that had used Document 5 as the evidence for weakness one would have been stronger still.

Second: the model never mentions the salary column. Document 4 shows middle school teachers averaging **\$36,000** while high school teachers average **\$54,000** in the same district — the most arresting number on the page, and an obvious candidate explanation for why experienced teachers transfer out of the middle schools, which is exactly what the newspaper article reports. Published models are strong responses, not perfect ones. Read them as a floor.

The moves that earn points

Strip the four task types of their subject matter and the same small set of moves is left. Learn the chain, then learn the seven rules that surround it.

Name it

One flat declarative sentence. **The issue is X. The strength is X. The first action is X.** No preamble, no hedging, no sentence that has to be finished before the claim appears.

Because

A reason welded to every single claim. ... **because** _____, and for a strategy, ... **which would** _____, **which in turn** _____. A mechanism, not a restatement of the goal.

Cite it

The specific fact from the prompt that makes the claim true — a person, a quotation, a number, **a document number**. Both long tasks open their charge with the words *citing specific*.

Face forward

In any action or strategy section, every verb points at the future. **“Should have” belongs only where you are judging the past**, which on this exam is one paragraph of one task type.

The seven rules

1

Count from the prompt in front of you. Before you type, write the numbers on your notebooklet: how many issues, how many actions, how many strengths, how many weaknesses, how many justifications. Then number your own paragraphs to match. Memorised counts are how candidates give two actions to a prompt asking three.

2

Give every obligation its own visible block. A grader reading a 600-word wall of prose has to hunt for your third action. A grader reading “*First... Second... Finally...*” cannot miss it. An obligation the grader cannot find is an obligation you did not meet.

3

Attach a because to every claim. This is the one habit that moves SUPPORT from “some relevant examples and/or generally sound reasoning” to “strong support.” If a sentence in your response has no reason attached and no evidence behind it, it is decoration.

4

Then add a for-example. SUPPORT says “examples **and/or** sound reasoning,” and all four official evaluations report finding both. A reason explains; an example proves you have done this. Two extra clauses per response is the entire cost.

5

Stay in role as superintendent. Not as a principal, not as a teacher, not as a consultant offering advice. You convene, you charge committees, you set district policy, you bring items to the governing body, you allocate resources, you require building plans aligned to district guidelines, and you hold people accountable for results. If the sentence you just wrote could have been written by an assistant principal, it is not scoring APPLICATION OF CONTENT.

6

Answer at district level. The exam is called School *District* Leader. The Case Study model’s central insight is that a two-building problem was really an absent district policy. When you diagnose, ask: what district-level structure — policy, protocol, standard, plan, committee, monitoring routine — is missing here? That question generates scoring answers on all four task types.

7

Write to the audience you were given. The Work Product task names one explicitly — a memo to a team you chair, 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: third person about the superintendent in the Case Study, first person for your own strategies elsewhere. Do not put a salutation on a task that did not ask for a document.

THE SENTENCE PATTERN THAT CARRIES MOST OF THE WEIGHT

“**[Claim], because [reason]. For example, [instance from the prompt].**” Three clauses. It satisfies PURPOSE (the claim answers a bullet), APPLICATION OF CONTENT (the claim is correct district practice) and SUPPORT (reason plus example) in one sentence. Every paragraph of every one of the four official strong responses is that pattern, expanded.

Failure modes

Specific, recurring ways SDL responses lose points — what each one looks like on the page, which criterion it costs, and the fix.

Failure mode	What it looks like	Costs you	Fix
Retrospective actions THE CLASSIC	The action section reads “the superintendent should have consulted the principals before announcing the reassignment” and “she should have built consensus first.” Both are true. Neither is an action to take now. You have written the weakness section twice and answered the third bullet zero times.	PURPOSE, hard. On the Case Study that is a third of a 33% task.	Check the auxiliary verb in every sentence of the action section. Should have → should. Past perfect belongs in one paragraph and one paragraph only.
Wrong count	Two actions when three were asked for. Three strategies when one was asked for. Two strengths when the charge said one strength and two weaknesses. Usually the direct result of writing from a memorised template.	PURPOSE. Under-counting caps you; over-counting eats the word budget.	Write the required numbers on the notebooklet before typing. Signpost your paragraphs with <i>First / Second / Finally</i> so you can count them yourself in the review pass.
Naked assertions	“I would form a districtwide committee.” Full stop. Or the circular version: “This will be effective because it will improve student achievement.” The reason restates the goal instead of naming a mechanism.	SUPPORT, and APPLICATION OF CONTENT by association.	Every claim gets “because” and a chain of at least two links. Then a <i>for example</i> . If you cannot say why something works, you have chosen the wrong something.
Ignoring the exhibits	A perfectly sensible Educational Program Analysis with no document numbers in it, or a Case Study whose judgements never name Mr. Kowalski, the two principals, the test scores or the pre-meeting announcement. Generic good practice, unattached to this district.	SUPPORT and APPLICATION OF CONTENT. Both long charges begin <i>citing specific</i> .	Put a document number or a named fact in the first sentence of each claim, the way the official model does: “... support and involvement (Documents #1 and #3).”
School-level answer to a district-level prompt	Recommendations that a principal could execute alone: walkthroughs, a faculty meeting agenda, a grade-level team, a classroom coaching cycle. Or the reflex to fix the one bad building rather than the missing district policy.	APPLICATION OF CONTENT — this is the criterion that tests whether you understand the role.	Ask what only a superintendent can do here: policy, protocol, governing-body engagement, districtwide standards, resource allocation, cross-building structures, accountability for building plans. Then let principals do the building-level work <i>aligned to what you set</i> .
Long on Assignment One, short on Assignment Two	A 400-word Work Product and a 320-word Case Study — a great deal of care spent on 17% and thin coverage of 33%. It happens because the short task is easier and comes first.	PURPOSE on the task that matters twice as much.	Budget by weight, not by order: roughly 35 minutes on the short task and 75 on the long one , and consider writing the long one first. The official models land at the top of each range or slightly past it, never near the floor.
Wrong audience	Writing the Work Product memo as an essay about the district, in the third person, with no addressee — or the reverse, opening a Case Study analysis with “Dear Board of Education.”	PURPOSE and APPLICATION OF CONTENT (communication skill is an objective in its own right).	Reread the verb in the charge. <i>Write a memo to the members of the team</i> is an instruction about format and reader. <i>Write a response</i> is not.
Acting outside your authority	“I would terminate the principal.” “I would change the collective bargaining agreement.” “I would adopt the policy at the next board	APPLICATION OF CONTENT. In New York this	Use the verbs that fit the role: recommend, present to the governing body, convene,

Failure mode	What it looks like	Costs you	Fix
	meeting.” The superintendent recommends; the board of education adopts policy and acts on personnel. Unilateral changes to terms and conditions of employment are negotiated, not announced.	reads as a governance error, not a bold choice.	charge, direct staff, allocate, require a plan, monitor, report. When a change touches employment terms, say you would engage the association and follow the agreement.
Copying the prompt	Opening sentences lifted verbatim from the scenario, or a response built mostly of quoted exhibit text with connective tissue.	Potentially unscorable — officially, a response “lacking a sufficient amount of original work to score.”	Quote sparingly and in quotation marks, as evidence. Everything else in your own words. This is an explicit instruction in the official directions, not an inference.
Solving a different problem	The Management Problem Solving charge asks how to build a system; the response investigates and disciplines the principal. The Educational Program Analysis charge asks about the educational programme ; the response analyses the budget.	PURPOSE, and at the extreme, unscorable as “unrelated to the assigned topic.”	Reread the charge after drafting and tick each bullet against a paragraph. If a paragraph does not answer a bullet, it is costing you words you needed elsewhere.
Chasing the sympathetic character	Devoting the Case Study to whether Mr. Kowalski was treated fairly, or to which principal is the better leader. The narrative supplies a grievance and invites you to adjudicate it.	PURPOSE and APPLICATION OF CONTENT.	The complaint is the doorway, not the topic. Ask what the case is <i>really</i> about at district level — here, the absence of districtwide expectations — and answer that.
Leaving one blank	Running out of time and submitting nothing for one assignment.	Officially scored B, blank . On a 33% task this is generally unrecoverable.	Hard checkpoint: both assignments must have a complete draft before you go back to any flagged multiple-choice item . A rough 4-paragraph answer scores; an empty box does not.

Two practice tasks, with model responses

Both of the tasks below are **practitioner-written practice** — ours, not NYSED’s and not Pearson’s. The scenarios, the model responses and the scoring commentary are all our own work, built to the official charge structures and scored against the official three criteria. They have never been reviewed by NYSED or Evaluation Systems, and no score they earn is an official score.

WHY BOTH PRACTICE TASKS ARE THE LONG ONES

Each of these is a **33%** task. They are the two tasks where a structural mistake is most expensive and where rehearsal pays most. Set a timer for **75 minutes**, read the scenario, write to the charge, and only then open the model. Reading a model without having written first teaches you almost nothing; the models are for comparison, not for absorption.

PRACTICE · PART ONE (103)

Case Study — two report cards, one district

300–600 WORDS · 75 MINUTES · PRACTITIONER-WRITTEN

Subarea II — Supervising Districtwide Change and Accountability. Touches objectives on the process of change and its management, data-driven decision-making and problem solving, and promoting accountability.

Case study

Dr. Nadia Osei is in her second year as superintendent of the Harrow Falls Central School District, a district of about 2,600 students with three elementary schools, one middle school and one high school.

In September, the parent of a fourth grader emails Dr. Osei directly. The family moved between two of the district's elementary schools over the summer, and the parent has discovered that the two schools use different report cards, different grading scales, and different criteria for recommending students for the district's Grade 5 accelerated mathematics placement. Her child qualified at one school and did not qualify at the other.

Dr. Osei replies the same day and meets the parent that week. She then asks the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction to pull three years of Grade 4 and Grade 5 records from all three elementary schools. The records confirm the parent's account: the three schools use three different report card formats, and Grade 5 accelerated mathematics placement rates range from **9 percent** at one school to **27 percent** at another, with no corresponding difference in state assessment results across the three schools. Dr. Osei meets each elementary principal individually. Each principal believes their school's practice is the district's practice. Neither board policy nor the district's administrative regulations say anything about report card format, grading practice or placement criteria.

Dr. Osei brings the placement data to the board of education's education committee, which asks her to address it.

At the October faculty conference at the school with the lowest placement rate, Dr. Osei tells the assembled staff that the district "will adopt a single K–5 report card and a single set of placement criteria, effective in January," that the present situation is "indefensible," and that the school's principal "has been holding students back." She names no committee and describes no process.

The following week the president of the Harrow Falls Teachers' Association writes to Dr. Osei and to the board. The letter states that report card format and grading practice have been on the agenda of the district's standing labor-management committee for two years, that the association was not consulted, and that a mid-year change would be pursued as a contractual matter. Two of the three elementary principals stop responding to the assistant superintendent's requests for placement data. Board members begin receiving emails from parents at all three schools.

Task

Citing specific examples from the information provided, write a response of about 300–600 words in which you: • describe what the superintendent **did well** in this situation; • describe what the superintendent **did poorly or failed to do**

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

Model response at score point 4 – open only after you have written your own

Dr. Osei did several things well. First, she responded to the parent's email the same day and met with her that week. A superintendent who is reachable learns about district problems early, and in this case a single family's experience surfaced an inequity in placement that three years of records had not brought to anyone's attention. Second, she converted an anecdote into evidence rather than acting on it, asking the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction for three years of Grade 4 and Grade 5 records from all three elementary schools. That step turned one complaint into a documented districtwide finding: placement rates ranging from 9 percent to 27 percent with no corresponding difference in state assessment results. Third, she met the three elementary principals individually, which allowed each to describe their own practice candidly rather than defensively, and produced the most important finding in the case — that each principal believed their practice was the district's practice. Fourth, she brought the placement data to the board of education's education committee before acting, informing the governing body of a significant equity issue and obtaining its support to address it.

Dr. Osei also made several serious errors. She announced a completed decision, at a single school's faculty conference, to an audience that had no role in making it and no notice that it was coming. She should have brought a proposed *process* rather than a finished decision, and should have communicated it to all three schools at once so that no building could conclude it had been singled out. She also criticised a named principal in front of that principal's own staff, which is a personnel matter conducted in public; it converted a districtwide policy problem into a personal accusation and predictably cost her the cooperation of the principals whose data she needs. She set a January effective date without consulting the teachers' association, even though a standing labor-management committee had carried report card format and grading practice on its agenda for two years and was available to her. Most fundamentally, she failed to act on her own finding. Her investigation established that neither board policy nor administrative regulation addressed reporting or placement criteria; the correct response to a policy vacuum is a policy, not an announcement.

Dr. Osei should take three actions. First, she should issue a written communication to all district staff, to the association president and to families at all three elementary schools stating that no reporting or placement change will take effect in January, that the district will develop common K–5 reporting and Grade 5 mathematics placement criteria for the following September through a defined process, and that the variation the data revealed is a district responsibility rather than any one school's or principal's failing. This is likely to be effective because it removes the mid-year deadline that triggered the contractual objection, replaces rumour with a single accurate account for every audience at once, and restores the standing of the principal she criticised publicly — which is the practical precondition for getting the placement data flowing again.

Second, she should recommend that the board of education adopt a policy establishing common districtwide expectations for elementary reporting to parents and guardians and for the criteria used in course and programme placement, and charge the superintendent with developing the

implementing regulation. This is likely to be effective because the cause of the disparity is the absence of any such policy: three schools wrote their own rules because the district never wrote any. A board-adopted policy makes the expectation the district's rather than the superintendent's, gives principals a common instrument instead of a personal instruction, and outlasts any individual administrator.

Finally, once the board has acted, she should convene a K–5 reporting and placement committee — the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, all three elementary principals, teachers from each school identified in consultation with the association, and parent representatives — charged with recommending a common report card and a common, evidence-based placement rubric for the following September, with any element affecting terms and conditions of employment routed through the existing labor-management committee, and with placement rates by school reported annually to the board. This is likely to be effective because it puts the people who built three different practices in the same room to build one, which is what secures implementation; because using the labor-management structure that already exists answers the association's objection procedurally rather than adversarially; and because annual reporting of placement rates builds in the accountability that was missing, so the next disparity is found by the district's own monitoring rather than by a family that happens to move.

About 600 words.

Why this would score a 4 – criterion by criterion

Criterion	What earns it here
PURPOSE	All three bullets have their own blocks, in the charge's order. Four things done well, signposted <i>First / Second / Third / Fourth</i> . Four things done poorly. Exactly three actions, signposted <i>First / Second / Finally</i> , each with its own explicit "likely to be effective because" clause so the fourth obligation cannot be missed. Every action is prospective; the only "should have" appears in the weakness paragraph, where it belongs.
APPLICATION OF CONTENT	The diagnosis is district-level: an absent policy, not a bad principal. The remedies use the instruments a superintendent actually holds — a districtwide communication, a policy <i>recommended</i> to the board, an implementing regulation, a chartered committee, an annual monitoring report. It respects the boundary of the role: it does not fire anyone, does not amend an agreement unilaterally, and routes anything touching terms and conditions of employment through the existing labor-management committee. And the three actions are sequenced — the committee is convened "once the board has acted" — which reads as a change plan rather than a list.
SUPPORT	Every judgement carries a reason, and the reasons are mechanisms rather than restated goals: individual meetings produced candour and therefore the key finding; the public criticism cost her access to the data; removing the January date removes the trigger for the contractual objection. Specific evidence from the case appears throughout — the 9-to-27 percent placement range, the absence of any corresponding difference in state assessment results, the two-year-old labor-management committee agenda, the two principals who stopped responding.

THE TWO-ACTION VERSION OF THIS RESPONSE

Delete the third action and the response is still articulate, still district-level, still well reasoned — and it has answered a three-action charge with two. In the language of the official scale, it now "partially fulfills the purpose of the assignment by responding in a limited way to the given task." That is the entire distance between a 4 and a 2 on PURPOSE, and it is a counting error, not a knowledge error.

PRACTICE · PART TWO (104)**Educational Program Analysis — five documents from an elementary district****300–600 WORDS · 75 MINUTES · PRACTITIONER-WRITTEN · MULTI-DOCUMENT**

Subarea I — Leading the District Educational Program. Touches objectives on understanding and supporting learning throughout the district, standards and expectations, and support to students. The documents are adapted from a practitioner-written district case study; the charge, the analysis and the model response are ours.

Scenario

You are the new superintendent of a suburban K–12 district of approximately 3,000 students, educated in five elementary schools, two middle schools and one high school. In January, at a public meeting, the board president directed your predecessor to reduce the expense side of the budget by **\$1 million**. Your predecessor and the assistant superintendent for business concluded that closing one elementary school was the only reduction of that size available, and prepared the material below. You have arrived in the middle of the resulting dispute, and the board has asked you for an analysis of the district's educational programme. Read all five documents.

Document 1 — District elementary school data

School	Enrolment	Capacity	% utilisation	ELA % at Levels 3–4	ELA % at Levels 1–2	Math % at Levels 3–4	Math % at Levels 1–2
School 1	310	420	74	73	27	74	26
School 2	280	340	82	62	38	70	30
School 3	400	510	78	87	13	80	20
School 4	330	410	80	83	17	84	16
School 5	200	300	67	77	23	79	21
District	1,520	1,980	77	77	23	77	23

School	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Native American
School 1	43%	25%	27%	5%	—
School 2	39%	31%	29%	1%	—
School 3	51%	19%	21%	9%	—
School 4	29%	29%	32%	9%	1%
School 5	32%	29%	28%	11%	—
District	39%	27%	27%	7%	—

Also supplied: a cost analysis showing that closing one elementary school would save approximately \$1.1 million — \$280,000 operations, \$720,000 staffing, \$100,000 supplies and materials.

Document 2 — Memorandum, superintendent to board president (February 15)

Lists the factors to consider in closing a school: condition of buildings, location, safety of children travelling to and from school, ethnicity of the student population after consolidation, and academic performance. Explains each chart. On academic performance, states only: “Be aware that by closing a building there will be a potential negative impact on academic performance as you put more

children in the other buildings.” Proposes a closed-door session in two weeks. States no programme goal and no instructional plan.

Document 3 – Parents Council letter (March 1)

Opposes closing any elementary school. Cites a “long history of academic and social emotional success in meeting the needs of every child” and “the individualized attention provided our children in every school,” and specifically names the fine arts, music, physical education, drama and other enrichment programmes. Warns of overcrowding. Asks the board to consider alternatives such as phased expenditure freezes. Closes: “We stand ready to discuss this most pressing issue.”

Document 4 – Teachers’ Association letter (March 15)

Opposes closing any elementary school. Argues that consolidation would raise class sizes and reduce “the personalization and individualization that characterizes” the district. Offers to meet “to establish a dialogue for developing budget alternatives,” and suggests reducing the number of administrators instead.

Document 5 – Board of Education minutes, April public meeting

Parents spoke against the closure and against reductions in instructional services in the remaining schools. Minutes record that the superintendent had told families at a recent presentation that “it would be necessary to reduce supplementary services in order to provide time for mandated state requirements.” Parents said they had fought to obtain those enrichment programmes and called the change “a step backwards.” The board president responded that the board must align the budget with the state property tax cap and community sentiment while still preparing students to perform well on state assessments.

Task

Citing specific evidence from the information provided, write a response of about 300–600 words in which you: • identify **one significant strength** of the district’s educational program, and describe a **strategy for building on this strength** to improve the district’s educational program; • identify **two significant weaknesses** of the district’s educational program; • for **each** of the weaknesses you have identified, describe **one strategy** to address that weakness; and • **explain why each of these strategies is likely to be effective** in improving the district’s educational program.

Model response at score point 4 – open only after you have written your own

One significant strength of the district’s educational programme is that it already produces strong overall elementary results and contains internal proof of the practices that produce them. Districtwide, 77 percent of elementary students score at Level 3 or above in both English language arts and mathematics, and Schools 3 and 4 reach 87 and 83 percent in English language arts and 80 and 84 percent in mathematics (Document 1). That strength is matched by an unusually organised community: both the Parents Council and the Teachers’ Association put their positions in writing and both explicitly offered to meet and to help develop alternatives (Documents 3 and 4).

One strategy for building on this strength is to charter a standing Elementary Program Council, convened by the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction and including the parent

and teacher representatives both groups have already volunteered, with a defined first product: documenting the scheduling, core instruction and intervention practices in place at Schools 3 and 4 and spreading them through cross-school instructional rounds and common planning time for grade-level teams. This is likely to be effective because the strongest professional learning available to this district costs nothing and is already inside it — practice in its own two highest-performing buildings, operating under the same calendar, contract and curriculum — and because it converts two organised groups from opponents of a budget action into participants in a programme improvement with a visible product.

One significant weakness is that student achievement varies sharply from building to building and the variation is not explained by student demographics. School 2 has 38 percent of students below proficiency in English language arts and 30 percent in mathematics, against School 4's 17 and 16 percent — a 21-point gap between two schools in the same district — while School 4's combined Black and Hispanic enrolment, at 61 percent, is slightly higher than School 2's 60 percent (Document 1). Whatever produces School 2's results is a programme variable, not a student variable, and the district has not asked which one.

To address this, the district should commission a programme review of School 2, led by the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction with the principal as a full partner and with reviewers drawn from Schools 3 and 4: an audit of protected instructional minutes for English language arts and mathematics in the master schedule, a review of core curriculum implementation and materials against the two higher-performing schools, calibrated walkthroughs using a common observation tool, and an analysis of which students are below proficiency and what intervention they receive. The review would produce a written improvement plan with quarterly benchmarks reported to the board. This is likely to be effective because it tests the demographic assumption rather than accepting it, and because it concentrates scarce resources in the one building the data identifies rather than spreading a districtwide initiative across four schools that do not need one. Drawing reviewers from Schools 3 and 4 means the review produces transferable practice and not only a verdict, and progress can be measured on the same assessment that identified the problem.

A second significant weakness is that programme decisions in this district are being driven by budget arithmetic with no instructional analysis anywhere in the record. The superintendent's memorandum treats academic performance solely as a risk of consolidation and states no programme goal (Document 2). Families were told that supplementary services would be reduced "in order to provide time for mandated state requirements" — a curricular decision, announced with no analysis of what those services contribute (Document 5). Both the Parents Council and the Teachers' Association identify loss of enrichment and individualisation as their central objection (Documents 3 and 4). The district has no visible mechanism for evaluating the instructional effect of a resource decision.

To address this, the district should require a written programme-effect analysis, prepared by the curriculum office, for every budget reduction option before it reaches the board — identifying which students and which programmes are affected, what participation and outcome data exist for each, and what would be done to protect the affected outcomes — supported by an inventory of

all supplementary and enrichment programmes with enrolment and outcome data, completed before any of them is reduced. This is likely to be effective because it forces every cost decision to be tested against student outcomes rather than only against dollars per building, which is precisely what both constituent letters are asking for; because it gives the board a documented, defensible record in a decision that will be contested whichever option it chooses; and because it produces something the district currently lacks and will need in every budget cycle — evidence about which of its supplementary programmes are worth protecting.

About 640 words — the same modest overrun the official models carry.

Why this would score a 4 — criterion by criterion

Criterion	What earns it here
PURPOSE	All eight obligations, in the charge's order, each in its own paragraph: one strength (not two), a build-on strategy, two weaknesses of genuinely different kinds — one about outcomes, one about process — a strategy for each, and a “likely to be effective because” clause for all three strategies, including the build-on strategy the charge left ambiguous. Every claim carries a document citation, satisfying the “citing specific evidence” instruction that opens the charge.
APPLICATION OF CONTENT	The data interpretation is the load-bearing move: it puts the achievement table and the enrolment table side by side and shows that the district's two most demographically similar schools produce a 21-point gap, which converts an assumption into a testable programme question. The remedies are district-level and role-appropriate — chartering a council, commissioning a programme review, requiring an analysis before a board decision, reporting benchmarks to the board — and none of them requires authority the superintendent does not have. The response also stays inside the charge: it is asked about the educational programme and it never argues for or against closing a school.
SUPPORT	Specific numbers throughout (77 percent districtwide, 38 versus 17, 61 versus 60 percent), quotations from Documents 2 and 5, and reasoning that runs as chains rather than labels: reviewers from high-performing schools → transferable practice, not just a verdict; programme-effect analysis → a defensible record → opposition converted into participation. It also names the measure by which each strategy could be judged, which is the cheapest strong finish available on this task.

THE TRAP IN THIS ONE

Everything on the page pushes you toward the school-closing decision — the cost analysis, the capacity chart, two letters of opposition and a public meeting. **The charge does not ask about the closure.** It asks you to analyse the district's *educational programme*. A response that spends 300 words weighing the merits of closing School 5 has answered a Management Problem Solving prompt that was not set, and will lose PURPOSE on the 33% task. Note also what the response declines to do with the ethnicity table: it uses it to **refute** a demographic explanation for the achievement gap, not to speculate about students. That is the safe and the strong use of that exhibit.

A timing plan for the four hours

Each part gives you **four hours of testing time** for 60 selected-response items and 2 written assignments, plus a separate 15 minutes for the computer-based testing tutorial and the nondisclosure agreement, which is not part of your four hours. Everything below is our recommendation, not an official allocation — the test allocates nothing per section.

240

Minutes of testing time per part

60

Selected-response items — 50% of the score

2

Written assignments — the other 50%

+15

Minutes for tutorial and NDA, outside the four hours

Clock	Mins	What you are doing	Why here
0:00–0:04	4	Open both written assignments and read only the charges. Scroll to the bottom of each — some do not fit one screen. On Part Two, click every Document tab so you know how many there are. Write on your notebooklet: the task type, the word range, and the required counts for each assignment.	Four minutes spent here is what prevents the two-actions-for-three error. It also lets the prompts sit in the back of your mind while you do multiple choice — you will notice items that hand you vocabulary.
0:04–1:26	82	All 60 selected-response items , about 80 seconds each. Leave nothing unanswered — an item left blank cannot score. Flag anything that takes more than 90 seconds and move on. Do not return to flagged items yet.	Multiple choice is the part of the test where speed is safe: your first instinct on a district-leadership item is usually right, and the marginal minute is worth far more inside a 33% essay.
1:26–1:30	4	Reset. Look away from the screen. Reread the charge of Assignment Two and your written counts.	You are about to spend 75 minutes on a third of your score. Enter it deliberately.
1:30–2:45	75	Assignment Two — the long, 33% task. Case Study on 103, Educational Program Analysis on 104. Budget it internally: 12 minutes reading the case or all the documents and noting evidence, 8 minutes outlining paragraph by paragraph against the charge, 45 minutes drafting, 10 minutes revising.	The long task gets the fresh brain and the biggest block, because it is worth twice the short one and because it is the one that needs sustained structure. On Part Two it also has five documents to read.
2:45–3:20	35	Assignment One — the short, 17% task. Work Product on 103, Management Problem Solving on 104. Budget: 5 minutes planning, 22 minutes drafting, 8 minutes revising. Stop at 300–340 words.	The short task has a narrow charge and a rehearsable shape. It does not need an hour, and giving it one is the most common way candidates end up thin on the task worth twice as much.
3:20–3:45	25	Flagged selected-response items. Work through them; guess and confirm on anything still unresolved so that no item is left unanswered.	This is the only work on the test that is safely deferrable, so it is what absorbs whatever time the writing actually took.
3:45–4:00	15	The charge audit. Reread each charge bullet and physically point at the paragraph that answers it. Count your actions, issues, strengths, weaknesses and justifications against the numbers on your notebooklet. Check that every verb in every action section faces forward. Check your name appears nowhere in either answer box.	This pass recovers more points per minute than anything else you can do at the end — a missing count or a stray “should have” is a two-minute fix worth a whole score point.

Practitioner-recommended, not official. Testing time and the separate 15 minutes for tutorial and nondisclosure agreement are official; the internal allocation is ours.

Three hard checkpoints

1

At 1:30 you are out of the multiple-choice section, whether or not you feel finished. Items you flagged are waiting for you at 3:20. Items you have not reached are not.

2

At 2:45 the long assignment has a complete draft — every bullet answered, every count hit, even if the prose is rough. Polish is worth nothing; a missing third action is worth a score point.

3

At 3:20 both answer boxes contain complete drafts. Nothing else — not a flagged item, not a rewrite — happens until this is true. An assignment left empty is scored **blank**, and on the 33% task that outcome cannot be repaired by anything else on the test.

The alternative order – write first

If you know that your writing degrades badly when tired, invert it: charges at 0:00, **Assignment Two 0:05–1:20**, **Assignment One 1:20–1:55**, then **60 items 1:55–3:25**, then a combined review to 4:00. The official directions confirm you may complete the assignments in either order and return to either as time permits. The risk of writing first is that an essay expands to fill whatever time is available and you arrive at the multiple-choice section with 70 minutes for 60 items. If you take this route, the 1:20 and 1:55 checkpoints are not negotiable.

If you are testing both parts in one appointment

Booking Part One and Part Two together is a **single appointment of about eight hours and forty minutes**, including a **40-minute lunch break** between them. That means four constructed responses in one day, two of them 300–600 words. Rehearse at least one full four-hour part end to end before doing that; the failure mode is not knowledge, it is the fourth essay. There is no fee penalty for splitting them: Part One is \$169 and Part Two is \$168, and the Both Parts fee is \$337 — exactly the sum. Each part is scored separately either way.

TWO PRACTICAL POINTS ABOUT THE ANSWER BOX

You type into an on-screen answer box directly beneath the assignment, and you may return to either written assignment for review later in the testing time. There is **no reference material** of any kind, so any framework, structure or vocabulary you intend to use has to be in your head. Draft the paragraph labels (*First / Second / Finally*) onto your notebooklet before you start typing so that the structure survives contact with the clock.

The four-week rehearsal

You cannot cram a constructed response. You can rehearse one until its shape is automatic, which is the whole point — on test day the structure should cost you no thought at all.

- **Week one — read the official material end to end.** Both sample-assignment PDFs, all four sample assignments, all four strong responses, all four evaluations, and the score scale. Read the evaluations twice. They are the only place anyone tells you, in the scorers' own words, what was worth credit.
- **Week two — write the four official samples under time**, closed-book, at 35 and 75 minutes. Then put your response beside the official one and mark the differences: what did the model count that you did not; where did the model attach a reason and you asserted; where did the model cite a document and you generalised.
- **Week three — drill the counts.** Take any charge, official or practice, and do nothing but the three-minute planning step: read the bullets, write the required numbers, sketch the paragraph labels. Do ten of them. The counting error is

the most expensive and the most preventable failure on this exam, and it is prevented entirely in the first three minutes.

- **Week four — one full four-hour simulation per part**, in one sitting, with a real 60-item set and both written tasks, on the timing plan above. Score yourself against the three criteria, not against a feeling. Then fix the one structural habit that cost you the most.

THE ONE-SENTENCE VERSION OF THIS WHOLE PAGE

Count the charge, answer every count in its own labelled block, attach a because and a for-example to every claim, cite the evidence you were given, keep every action facing forward, and answer as the superintendent of a district rather than as the leader of a school. Everything else here is detail on those six moves.

PART VI

Practice Items

99 selected-response items across 17 district scenarios. Questions only — correct answers and full rationales are in the companion SDL Answer Key, under the same item numbers.

HOW TO WORK THIS PART

Fill one bubble per item. Where a scenario box appears, read it and work every item beneath it before moving on. Item tags show the part, the objective and the source: **official** items are NYSTCE sample items, **adapted** items were rewritten for a New York district context from other banks, **practice** items are practitioner-written.

1. Part 103 · obj 0001 · official

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

- (A) providing the district leader with information and insight about how aspects of the broader community relate to district functioning
- (B) contributing to an atmosphere of appreciation and support for district students and staff
- (C) offering families and other constituents multiple opportunities to talk to the district leader about issues of concern
- (D) promoting a district culture that emphasizes high standards and expectations for all students

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

Quarry Hill Central School District is a component district of its regional BOCES, enrolling 2,850 students. Superintendent Okafor is in his first year. The board has seven trustees; three were elected in May on a platform of “more accountability from the central office.”

Three things happen in Okafor’s first two months. First, a trustee telephones the high school principal directly to ask why her nephew was not selected for the varsity roster, and follows up with an email asking the principal to “reconsider.” Second, the board’s newest trustee proposes a resolution directing the superintendent to reassign a specific assistant principal to a different building. Third, at the September meeting, the board goes into executive session on a motion stating only “personnel,” and during the session two trustees begin debating whether to withdraw from the BOCES special education program — a service that currently serves 46 Quarry Hill students in three regional programs.

The board president asks Okafor to prepare a short presentation for the October meeting on “who decides what” in a New York school district, including the board’s relationship to BOCES and the superintendent’s statutory role in appointments. She also asks him to say plainly, in public, what the board may and may not do in executive session, because she expects the question to come up again.

Document 1 — Board of Education Minutes, September Regular Meeting (excerpt)

7:41 p.m. On motion by Trustee Doyle, seconded by Trustee Amir, the Board resolved to enter executive session “to discuss personnel.” Motion carried 6–0. The Board entered executive session at 7:44 p.m.

9:12 p.m. The Board returned to public session. No action was taken.

9:14 p.m. Trustee Doyle moved that “the Superintendent be directed to reassign the Assistant Principal at Quarry Hill Middle School to the High School effective November 1.” Discussion followed. The President ruled the motion out of order pending advice of counsel. Trustee Doyle objected to the ruling.

9:22 p.m. Under New Business, Trustee Amir asked the Superintendent to report at the October meeting on the cost of the BOCES special education program and “what it would take to bring those students back in district.”

2. Part 103 · obj 0001 · practice

A trustee telephones the high school principal directly to ask why her nephew was not selected for the varsity roster and follows up by email asking the principal to “reconsider.” The principal calls Superintendent Okafor for guidance. Okafor’s most appropriate response is to:

- (A) advise the principal to answer the trustee’s questions fully, since board members are entitled to any district information they request.
- (B) tell the principal to refer the trustee to the superintendent, and speak with the trustee and the board president about the board’s authority to act only as a body.
- (C) direct the athletic director to review the selection process and report the result to the trustee before the next board meeting.
- (D) place the matter on the next board agenda so that the full board can determine whether the selection was handled properly.

3. Part 103 · obj 0001 · practice

The board president asks Superintendent Okafor to explain publicly what the board may and may not do in executive session. Based on the September minutes, the most accurate statement for Okafor to make is that:

- (A) the motion must identify the general area of the subject to be considered, and a debate about withdrawing from a BOCES program is a policy matter that belongs in public session.
- (B) a board may enter executive session by majority vote for any matter it considers sensitive, provided no formal action is taken there.
- (C) personnel matters of every kind may be discussed in executive session, including the reassignment of a named assistant principal and the cost of regional programs.
- (D) executive session is available only for matters involving litigation or the sale of real property, so the September session was improper in its entirety.

4. Part 103 · obj 0001 · practice

In preparing the October presentation, which statement about the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) should Okafor include?

- (A) BOCES is a regional office of the State Education Department with supervisory authority over the instructional programs of its component districts.
- (B) Once a district joins a BOCES, it must purchase all special education and career and technical education services through that BOCES.
- (C) BOCES is a voluntary cooperative of component school districts that provides shared instructional and support services which districts purchase under contract, with a portion of the cost aidable to the district.
- (D) Every public school district in New York State, including the large city districts, is a component district of a BOCES.

5. Part 103 · obj 0001 · practice

Trustee Doyle's motion would direct the superintendent to reassign a named assistant principal to a different building. In advising the board president, Okafor should explain that the fundamental problem with the motion is that:

- (A) the board must first give the assistant principal notice and an opportunity to be heard before voting on a transfer.
- (B) assignment of administrative staff is an executive function carried out by the superintendent; the board's role is to set policy and to act on the superintendent's recommendations.
- (C) a transfer cannot take effect in the middle of a school year without the consent of the bargaining unit.
- (D) the motion should have been introduced in executive session rather than in public session.

6. Part 103 · obj 0001 · practice

A district leader is planning an orientation session on the New York State Code of Ethics for Educators for newly appointed administrators. Which of the following is the most accurate description of the Code for that audience?

- (A) a set of enforceable disciplinary standards; a violation is itself grounds for revocation of a certificate
- (B) a required district policy that each board of education must adopt verbatim and post in every building
- (C) a statement of the principles and aspirations of the profession, adopted by the Board of Regents, intended to guide practice and self-reflection rather than to serve as a disciplinary instrument
- (D) a code applicable to classroom teachers only; school and district leaders are governed instead by the district's employee handbook

7. Part 103 · obj 0002 · official

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

- (A) garnering public support by defining the primary functions of the school district, including identifying its constituencies and the benefits it provides key stakeholder groups
- (B) providing a strategic road map for reaching educational goals and objectives that is aligned with the school district's philosophy of education and K–12 standards
- (C) establishing a specific set of goals and expectations regarding the nature and extent of interaction and collaboration among members of the district's educational community
- (D) guiding and directing district improvement by articulating a clear image of the future of the school community based on stakeholders' ideals and beliefs

Scenario – Crestline Central School District – A Vision Nobody Owns

Crestline Central School District enrolls 4,100 students across three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school in a rural-suburban county. Six years ago the board adopted a vision statement — “Crestline: college, career, and community ready” — drafted over a summer by the previous superintendent and two board members and approved at an August meeting with no public comment.

Superintendent Bell arrived in July. In her first sixty days she asked every building leader to describe how the vision shapes decisions in their school. The high school principal produced a strategic plan aligned to it. The middle school principal said the vision “lives on the letterhead.” The three elementary principals each described a different set of priorities, one of them the successor to a schoolwide initiative discontinued four years ago. The district's three-year professional learning calendar contains no reference to the vision. Two of the district's five schools have their own mission statements adopted by their shared decision-making teams; neither mentions the district vision.

Bell also learns that the board's adopted goals for the current year — raising the graduation rate, expanding career and technical education through the BOCES, and holding the tax levy increase under the levy limit — were written without reference to the vision statement, and that the board's annual superintendent evaluation instrument does not mention it.

At her first board retreat, one trustee tells Bell the district has “been through this before” and that another vision exercise will be read as a stalling tactic. A second trustee wants the vision rewritten and adopted at the next regular meeting so that budget development can proceed against it.

8. Part 103 · obj 0002 · practice

Given what Superintendent Bell learned in her first sixty days, her most appropriate first step regarding the district vision would be to:

- Ⓐ engage building leaders, staff, families, students and the board in examining the existing statement against current district data, and decide together whether it still expresses what the community wants for its students.
- Ⓑ draft a revised vision statement over the winter and bring it to the board for adoption at the next regular meeting so budget development can proceed against it.
- Ⓒ direct each principal to align the school's mission statement to the district vision by the end of the semester and to report the alignment in writing.
- Ⓓ defer any vision work until after the May budget vote so that the district's limited energy goes to the board's three adopted goals.

9. Part 103 · obj 0002 · practice

Which finding from Bell's first sixty days is the strongest evidence that the current vision is *not sustainable* as adopted?

- Ⓐ The board's annual goals, the three-year professional learning calendar and the superintendent's evaluation instrument make no reference to the vision.
- Ⓑ The middle school principal described the vision as living “on the letterhead.”
- Ⓒ Two schools have adopted their own mission statements that do not mention the district vision.
- Ⓓ Three elementary principals each described a different set of building priorities.

10. Part 103 · obj 0002 · practice

Bell wants school-level and district-level visions to be mutually supportive rather than identical. The most effective approach would be to:

- Ⓐ require every school to adopt the district vision statement verbatim as its own mission statement.
- Ⓑ ask each school's shared decision-making team to state how its own mission advances the district vision and what evidence in that school will show progress.
- Ⓒ eliminate school-level mission statements so that only one statement of purpose exists in the district.
- Ⓓ have the board adopt each school's mission statement by resolution so that the statements carry equal authority.

11. Part 103 · obj 0002 · practice

A district's vision commits it to preparing every graduate for postsecondary education or skilled employment. In building the next budget, the district leader can best use the vision by:

- Ⓐ presenting the vision statement in the opening pages of the budget document so that residents read it before the numbers.
- Ⓑ protecting every existing program from reduction, since each was adopted at some point to serve the district's students.
- Ⓒ asking each building leader to submit a budget request that quotes the vision statement in its justification.
- Ⓓ using the vision as the criterion for ranking proposed additions and reductions, and showing the board where each proposal advances or retreats from it.

12. Part 103 · obj 0002 · adapted

A superintendent's vision is to establish a professional learning community in every school focused on early literacy. She issues a memorandum to building principals directing them to disseminate information about the new learning communities to their staffs. Resistance appears almost immediately. The most likely reason is that:

- (A) principals and teachers were not interested in participating in professional learning communities.
- (B) the staff disregarded the initiative because a superintendent ordered it.
- (C) the superintendent did not build support for the change by discussing the idea with the constituencies who would have to carry it out.
- (D) the principals do not believe change is possible in their schools.

Scenario – Northgate School District – Budget Letter to Families

Reproduced from the official NYSED/Pearson School District Leader Preparation Guide, Part One. Official stems are shorter than the practitioner-written scenarios elsewhere in this bank.

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

Document 1 – Opening Paragraphs of the Draft Letter

Dear Parents/Guardians,

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

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

13. Part 103 · obj 0003 · official

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

- (A) using simpler language and a less bureaucratic tone
- (B) replacing vague references to enrollments and costs with actual figures
- (C) using a friendlier, more welcoming introductory sentence
- (D) inserting definitions of technical terms with which some readers may be unfamiliar

14. Part 103 · obj 0003 · official

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

- (A) many individuals other than those in the intended audience will be able to access the information included in the letter.
- (B) most people place greater trust in information received by mail or other traditional modes of communication.
- (C) some members of the intended audience may not have ready access to the Internet or may not regularly check the district Web site.
- (D) information posted on the Internet can be easily modified or deleted by individuals who are not authorized to make such changes.

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

At 6:50 a.m. on a Tuesday, the Westbrook Central School District transportation supervisor calls Superintendent Hartley: a district bus carrying 31 middle school students has been struck at an intersection. Four students and the driver were transported to the regional hospital; injuries are reported as non-life-threatening. By 7:20 a.m. a photograph of the bus is circulating on a community social media page with a caption asserting that the driver “ran the light.” By 7:40 a.m. the district office has taken 60 telephone calls, and a local television station has a truck at the scene.

Westbrook enrolls 5,600 students. Roughly one family in six speaks a language other than English at home; Spanish and Haitian Creole are the two largest. The district’s mass notification system reaches families by phone, text, and email but has never been used in a language other than English. The district website is maintained by one part-time communications specialist who arrives at 8:30 a.m.

The board president texts Hartley asking whether the board should hold a special meeting. The transportation supervisor asks whether he may tell the media that the district’s driver was not at fault; he has been told this by another driver who arrived after the collision. A trustee has already posted on her personal page that “our driver did nothing wrong.” Police have not yet released any determination, and the district’s insurer has not been notified.

Document 1 – Draft Statement Prepared by the Transportation Supervisor, 7:55 a.m.

“The Westbrook Central School District can confirm that at approximately 6:35 a.m. this morning, a district vehicle transporting students was involved in a motor vehicle accident that was not the fault of our operator. Four students sustained minor injuries and were transported for evaluation as a precaution. All district protocols were followed. The district considers this matter closed pending the accident report and will have no further comment.”

Document 2 – Email Received at 8:05 a.m. from the Co-Chairs of the Westbrook Bilingual Parent Advisory Group

Superintendent Hartley,

Families are calling us because they received a recorded message in English that they could not understand and they do not know whether their child was on that bus. Some parents have driven to the middle school and are standing in the parking lot. Two families have gone to the hospital because they assumed the worst.

We are asking for three things this morning: a message in Spanish and Haitian Creole, a single telephone number a parent can call to find out whether their own child is accounted for, and a place at the school where a parent can wait and be given information by a person rather than a recording. We can help translate today if you send us the text.

15. Part 103 · obj 0003 · practice

Superintendent Hartley reviews the transportation supervisor’s draft statement. The most serious problem with it is that it:

- Ⓐ is too short to satisfy the media outlets that have already arrived at the scene.
- Ⓑ asserts a conclusion about fault that no authority has reached and announces that the district will say nothing further.
- Ⓒ gives the time of the collision, which should not be released until the police report is complete.
- Ⓓ refers to a “district vehicle” rather than naming the bus route and the school involved.

16. Part 103 · obj 0003 · practice

It is 7:45 a.m. Which action should Hartley take first?

- (A) Send a brief message through every available channel, in English, Spanish and Haitian Creole, stating what is known, and giving a staffed telephone number and a physical location where families can learn whether their own child is accounted for.
- (B) Convene the district's communications specialist and cabinet at 8:30 a.m. to develop a coordinated message for release at midday.
- (C) Ask the board president to convene a special meeting of the board so that the board can approve the district's public statement.
- (D) Direct all building principals to refer every inquiry to the district office and to make no statement of any kind to families.

17. Part 103 · obj 0003 · practice

Hartley learns that a trustee has posted on her personal social media page that "our driver did nothing wrong." The most appropriate response is for Hartley to:

- (A) post a district correction on the same community page identifying the statement as the trustee's personal opinion.
- (B) contact the board president so that she and Hartley can speak with the trustee about the risk the post creates, and reissue the district's factual statement through district channels.
- (C) ask the district's attorney to send the trustee a letter directing her to remove the post.
- (D) take no action, since a trustee's personal social media account is not a district communication channel.

Scenario – Flanders Central School District – Closing an Elementary School

Flanders Central School District is a suburban K–12 district enrolling about 3,000 students in five elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. The district is proud of an unusually broad elementary enrichment program in art, music, drama, and physical education, and families routinely name it as the reason they moved in.

At the January public meeting, the board president directed Superintendent Alvarez to bring back a plan removing \$1 million from the expense side of next year's budget. Alvarez met privately with the assistant superintendent for business. The two concluded that savings of that size could only come from closing one of the five elementary schools. The assistant superintendent prepared four charts — building capacity and utilization, a generic cost-savings analysis, enrollment by race and ethnicity, and grade 3–5 performance by school.

On February 15 Alvarez sent the charts to the board president under a memorandum listing the factors the board should weigh and proposing that the board take the matter up in a closed-door session two weeks later. The memorandum reached the community before the board had discussed it.

On March 1 the Parents' Council wrote the board president opposing any closing and proposing a spending freeze instead. On March 15 the Flanders Teachers' Association wrote to oppose the closing and to suggest reducing the number of administrators. At the April public meeting, parents reported that Alvarez had told them supplementary services would have to be cut "to provide time for mandated state requirements." The board president replied that the board is caught between the tax levy limit, community sentiment, and its obligation to a strong instructional program.

The annual budget vote is the third Tuesday in May. The board has not yet adopted a proposed budget, and no school-specific cost study, building condition analysis, or transportation study has been done.

Document 1 – Elementary School Data (prepared by the Assistant Superintendent for Business)

Chart 1 — Size and Capacity of Elementary Schools

School	Students	Capacity	% Utilization
Flanders 1	310	420	74%
Flanders 2	280	340	82%
Flanders 3	400	510	78%
Flanders 4	330	410	80%
Flanders 5	200	300	67%
Total	1,520	1,980	77%

Chart 2 — Projected Annual Savings from Closing “an Elementary School”

Category	Projected savings
Operations (utilities, heat, water, maintenance)	\$280,000
Staffing (principal, secretary, guidance, custodial, teachers)	\$720,000
Supplies and materials	\$100,000
Total	\$1,100,000

Chart 3 — Elementary Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

School	Students	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian
Flanders 1	310	43%	25%	27%	5%
Flanders 2	280	39%	31%	29%	1%
Flanders 3	400	51%	19%	21%	9%
Flanders 4	330	29%	29%	32%	9%
Flanders 5	200	32%	29%	28%	11%
District	1,520	39%	27%	27%	7%

Chart 4 — Grade 3–5 State Assessment Performance by School (percentage at each level)

School	ELA L4	ELA L3	ELA L2	ELA L1	Math L4	Math L3	Math L2	Math L1
Flanders 1	16%	57%	20%	7%	11%	63%	24%	2%
Flanders 2	19%	43%	29%	9%	9%	61%	27%	3%
Flanders 3	23%	64%	12%	1%	21%	59%	19%	1%
Flanders 4	18%	65%	17%	0%	26%	58%	16%	0%
Flanders 5	20%	57%	19%	4%	18%	61%	19%	2%
District	19%	58%	19%	4%	17%	60%	21%	2%

Document 2 — Superintendent’s Memorandum, February 15

To: President, Board of Education · **From:** Superintendent Alvarez · **Re:** Closing of an elementary school

I am writing to inform you of the potential cost savings versus detrimental effects of closing an elementary school. There are many factors to consider, including condition of buildings, location of the school to be closed, safety of children going to and coming from school, ethnicity of the student population after consolidation, and the academic performance of all elementary school children.

Chart 1 provides the elementary registers, capacities, and percent utilization so you can determine the impact of a closing on the utilization of the remaining buildings. Chart 2 provides the potential cost savings of closing any elementary school. Chart 3 provides the ethnic breakdown of each school so that you understand a closing will affect the make-up of the remaining schools. Chart 4 provides academic performance; be aware that a closing may negatively affect performance as more children are placed in the other buildings.

I suggest you review the enclosed facts and that we meet in a closed-door session in two weeks to discuss this issue.

Document 3 – Letter from the President of the Parents’ Council, March 1

Dear Mr. Board President:

On behalf of the parents and children of Flanders, I write to express our concerns about closing an elementary school. Closing a school will diminish our outstanding elementary instructional program and squeeze our children into the remaining schools, leaving them overcrowded.

We moved into Flanders because of the individualized attention provided in every school, and we cherish our children’s experiences in the fine arts, music, physical education, and drama. It is our position that this budget realignment will harm rather than benefit the academic growth of our students. We request that the board consider other savings instead — for example, freezing expenditures over time. We stand ready to discuss this pressing issue.

Document 4 – Letter from the President, Flanders Teachers’ Association, March 15

Dear Mr. President and Superintendent:

We write to make our concerns known about the potential closing of an elementary school. Closing any elementary school would increase the populations of the remaining schools, increase class size, and decrease the personalization that characterizes this district.

We are aware that the budget-building process for next year is not finished. We go on record opposing the closing of any district elementary school, and we are available to meet at a mutually convenient time to establish a dialogue on alternatives. Perhaps by reducing the number of administrators the district could achieve the same result.

Document 5 – Board of Education Minutes, April Public Meeting (excerpt)

Parents spoke at length about the possible closing of an elementary school and the potential reduction of instructional services in the remaining elementary schools.

Parents reported that the Superintendent had told them at a recent presentation that “it would be necessary to reduce supplementary services in order to provide time for mandated state requirements.” Parents stated they had fought hard to obtain these enrichment programs and that this is a step backwards. They were disappointed and angry.

The Board President responded that the Board is in a no-win position: the Board must keep the budget within the tax levy limit and consistent with community sentiment while still providing a strong instructional program. The Board promised to continue to address the issue. No action was taken.

18. Part 103 · obj 0003 · practice

Which communication decision by Superintendent Alvarez most directly produced the community reaction recorded in the April board minutes?

- (A) sending the charts to the board president in a written memorandum rather than presenting them orally
 - (B) developing the closing analysis privately with one administrator and proposing to take it up in closed session, so that families first learned of it through rumor
 - (C) including the racial and ethnic composition of each school in the material sent to the board
 - (D) telling parents at a presentation that supplementary services would have to be reduced
-

19. Part 103 · obj 0004 · official

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

- (A) prepare to advise the members about both the costs and the benefits likely to be associated with the approach they have selected.
 - (B) work with those members who agreed with him to determine if a compromise solution can be crafted that will be acceptable to all.
 - (C) communicate support for the decision made by the majority of the members and determine how best to implement it.
 - (D) urge those members who had agreed with his approach to accept and support the decision made by the majority.
-

20. Part 103 · obj 0004 · practice

Assume the board directs Alvarez to restart the school-closing analysis properly. Which action should come first?

- (A) Publishing the four charts on the district website so that residents have the same information the board has.
 - (B) Retaining a demographic and facilities consultant to identify which school should be closed and to present the recommendation to the board.
 - (C) Convening a broad-based advisory committee — parents, teachers, the bargaining units, building leaders, and community members — charged with defining the criteria by which any consolidation would be judged, before any school is named.
 - (D) Meeting separately with the Parents' Council president and the Teachers' Association president to explain why the closing is financially unavoidable.
-

21. Part 103 · obj 0004 · adapted

Facing a mid-year reduction in state aid, an assistant superintendent for business develops a set of spending reductions, reviews them with the superintendent, and the reductions are announced at the next board meeting. Which groups were improperly excluded from the development of the reductions?

- (A) teachers only
 - (B) district and building administrators only
 - (C) non-instructional support staff only
 - (D) teachers, district and building administrators, non-instructional support staff, and the leadership of the district's bargaining units
-

22. Part 103 · obj 0004 · adapted

At a monthly meeting, a district parents' council asks the superintendent to create a new districtwide policy governing student possession of cell phones and other personal electronic devices. The superintendent's best response is to:

- (A) tell the council that policy development is not an appropriate subject for a parent group.
- (B) explain that policy adoption rests with the board of education, commit to bringing the request forward, and describe how administrators, teachers, students and families will be consulted in developing any draft.
- (C) agree to draft a policy immediately and bring it back to the council for its approval at the next monthly meeting.
- (D) refer the council to the building principals, since device rules are enforced at the building level.

23. Part 103 · obj 0004 · practice

A district enters a clinical practice partnership with a nearby college that prepares teachers. Which arrangement is most likely to benefit both the college's teacher candidates and the district's students?

- (A) placing candidates only in the district's highest-performing school so they observe strong practice from the start
- (B) accepting as many candidates as the college can send, since additional adults in classrooms are always a benefit to students
- (C) limiting placements to student teaching in the final semester so that candidates are as prepared as possible before they work with district students
- (D) jointly selecting and preparing cooperating teachers, placing candidates in teams across schools with high need, and building a shared calendar in which college faculty and district staff plan and debrief together

24. Part 103 · obj 0004 · adapted

Two district departments have reached an impasse over how a shared federal grant will be spent, and each has asked the superintendent to decide. Before deciding, the superintendent's most productive step would be to:

- (A) decide the matter promptly, since a superintendent who does not resolve disputes invites more of them.
- (B) divide the funds equally between the two departments so that neither is seen to have lost.
- (C) bring both departments together to state the outcome each is trying to produce for students and to test each proposal against the grant's allowable uses and the district's priorities.
- (D) refer the dispute to the board of education, since the grant was accepted by board resolution.

25. Part 103 · obj 0005 · official

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

- (A) using face-to-face interactions to learn about the priorities, attitudes, and concerns of relevant interest groups within the district.
- (B) developing a concrete action plan detailing how changes are expected to be implemented.
- (C) contacting local media outlets to provide a preview of the changes and to assure ongoing cooperation from and access to district staff.
- (D) disseminating a comprehensive analysis of data used to determine the need for change in the district.

Scenario – Mapleton Central School District – Year Two of the Math Adoption

Mapleton Central School District adopted a new K–8 mathematics program two years ago after a fifteen-month process that included a teacher-led review committee, three public information sessions, and board adoption in March. Year one was a pilot in two of the five elementary buildings. This year the program went districtwide in grades K–5, and the middle school begins next year.

Superintendent Reyes budgeted three full days of program-specific professional learning for K–5 teachers plus a half-time districtwide math coach. In September the coach resigned for a position in another district and the vacancy has not been filled. Two of the three professional learning days were repurposed in August for a mandated safety training and a new student information system rollout.

By November the pattern is clear. In the two pilot buildings, walkthroughs show teachers using the program’s problem-based lesson structure and its formative “exit task.” In the three new buildings, walkthroughs show teachers using the new textbook but teaching from it the way they taught the old program: direct instruction, then independent practice, with the problem-based portion skipped. Two principals report that their teachers say the lessons “take too long” and that they are behind the pacing guide.

At the November board meeting, three parents ask the board to abandon the program. The board president asks Reyes for “a plan by January.” The teachers’ association president tells Reyes privately that her members are not opposed to the program — they are opposed to being held accountable for a program the district did not resource.

26. Part 103 · obj 0005 · practice

Superintendent Reyes reviews the November walkthrough evidence. The best-supported explanation for the difference between the two pilot buildings and the three new buildings is that:

- Ⓐ the supports that made implementation possible in the pilot — coaching and program-specific professional learning — were removed before the districtwide rollout.
- Ⓑ teachers in the three new buildings are more resistant to change than teachers in the pilot buildings.
- Ⓒ the new program is not appropriate for the students in the three new buildings.
- Ⓓ the principals in the three new buildings have not enforced the pacing guide.

27. Part 103 · obj 0005 · practice

The board president has asked for “a plan by January.” Which element is most important for Reyes to include?

- Ⓐ a revised timeline that delays the middle school rollout by one year and restores the coaching position and the professional learning days for grades K–5
- Ⓑ a commitment that every K–5 teacher will be observed twice before March using a program fidelity checklist
- Ⓒ a public communication campaign explaining to families the research base behind the new program
- Ⓓ a survey of K–5 teachers asking whether the district should continue with the program

28. Part 103 · obj 0005 · practice

Three parents have asked the board to abandon the program. Reyes’ most appropriate response at the board meeting is to:

- Ⓐ defend the adoption by describing the fifteen-month review process and the committee that recommended the program.
- Ⓑ agree to place the question of continuing the program on the agenda of the next board meeting.
- Ⓒ explain that curriculum adoption is an administrative matter and that public comment is not an appropriate way to raise it.
- Ⓓ acknowledge the concerns, describe what the pilot data show, name the implementation gap candidly, and state what the district will do and by when.

29. Part 103 · obj 0005 · adapted

An assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction convenes principals to review the professional development calendar and tells them that an extensive agenda for the coming year's conference days has already been planned. The principals' most likely reaction, and the reason for it, is that they are:

- (A) pleased, because planning conference days is time-consuming work they are glad to be relieved of.
- (B) displeased, because neither they nor their staffs were involved in identifying the needs the professional development is meant to address.
- (C) indifferent, because the assistant superintendent is following the district's adopted professional development plan.
- (D) concerned primarily that the calendar may conflict with previously scheduled building events.

30. Part 103 · obj 0005 · practice

A superintendent introducing a districtwide grading reform expects opposition from a well-organized group of parents whose children benefit from current practice. In planning the rollout, the superintendent's most useful early action is to:

- (A) identify who in the community holds informal influence, learn what each group stands to lose, and design the rollout so those losses are named and addressed rather than discovered.
- (B) secure a unanimous board resolution endorsing the reform before any public discussion begins.
- (C) announce the change with a firm implementation date so that the debate is about how rather than whether.
- (D) begin with the schools whose parent communities are least likely to object and expand once results are available.

Scenario – Comprehensive Education Planning Team – ELA Program Review

Reproduced from the official NYSED/Pearson School District Leader Preparation Guide, Part One.

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

31. Part 103 · obj 0006 · official

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

- (A) Has this option worked well in other districts in the state or elsewhere?
- (B) Would this option be effective in addressing key causes of students' lagging achievement?
- (C) Are most teachers in the district likely to be inclined to support this option?
- (D) How long after implementation of this option begins could we expect to see positive results?

32. Part 103 · obj 0006 · practice

A district is beginning a five-year strategic plan. Which set of inputs best reflects sound practice for comprehensive, long-range planning at the district level?

- (A) the superintendent's entry plan findings and the board's annual goals
- (B) multi-year student performance and growth data, enrollment and demographic projections, facilities condition and capacity, fiscal projections including the levy limit, and staffing and retirement projections — assembled with stakeholder input
- (C) the most recent state assessment results disaggregated by school and student group
- (D) a benchmark comparison against the five districts most similar to this one in enrollment and wealth

33. Part 103 · obj 0006 · practice

A superintendent notes that four of the district's seven building leaders and both assistant superintendents are eligible to retire within five years. The most effective response is to:

- (A) begin a national search earlier than usual for each position as it becomes vacant.
- (B) ask each retiring leader to remain for two additional years to prevent simultaneous vacancies.
- (C) restructure central office to reduce the number of positions that will need to be filled.
- (D) build a succession plan that identifies and develops internal candidates through mentoring, cross-assignment, and expanded leadership responsibility, while keeping external searches open.

34. Part 103 · obj 0006 · practice

A district's three-year improvement plan is in its second year when the superintendent departs and an interim is appointed. The board's most important action for sustaining the plan is to:

- (A) keep the plan's goals, benchmarks and public reporting cycle in force and charge the interim with continuing implementation and reporting progress on schedule.
- (B) suspend the plan until a permanent superintendent is appointed so that the new leader is not constrained.
- (C) ask the departing superintendent to remain as a paid consultant to the interim for the balance of the year.
- (D) reduce the plan to the two or three goals the interim is personally most comfortable leading.

35. Part 103 · obj 0006 · adapted

A district's long-range plan calls for one-to-one student devices within four years. Before recommending the first-year purchase to the board, the most important step for the district leader is to:

- (A) survey students and families to determine which device platform they prefer.
- (B) negotiate the lowest available unit price so that the largest possible number of devices can be purchased in year one.
- (C) confirm that network capacity, device management, technical support staffing, professional learning, and a multi-year replacement funding plan are in place or budgeted.
- (D) identify a single school to receive all first-year devices so the district can evaluate the initiative before expanding.

36. Part 103 · obj 0007 · official

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

- (A) minimize the costs associated with gathering information.
- (B) collect information that can be easily and efficiently interpreted.
- (C) ensure participation by a large representative sample of stakeholders.
- (D) elicit detailed, in-depth responses from stakeholders.

Scenario – Harborview City School District – Reading the Districtwide Data

Harborview City School District enrolls 6,405 students in four elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school in an upstate small city. Superintendent Nwosu is in her second year. The board's adopted goal for the year is "every school improving, and the gap between our highest- and lowest-performing schools narrowing."

In September the assistant superintendent for curriculum brought the cabinet a one-page summary of last spring's grade 3–8 results alongside chronic absenteeism and economic-disadvantage rates. Two cabinet members read the summary the same way: Ridgeway Elementary is the district's problem, its principal is in her third year, and the fastest route to the board's goal is to replace the leadership team and adopt a scripted reading program at Ridgeway.

Nwosu is not ready to accept that reading. Ridgeway serves the district's two public-housing complexes and enrolls 78 percent economically disadvantaged students, more than any other school; it also has the district's highest chronic absenteeism. Ridgeway's teachers turned over at 31 percent last year, against a district average of 12 percent, and the school has had three principals in six years. No one at the table can say how many Ridgeway students were enrolled for a full year, and the district's student information system reports mobility only at the district level.

The board wants a recommendation at its October meeting. The teachers' association has already asked, in writing, whether the district intends to make personnel decisions on the basis of a single year of state assessment results.

Document 1 – Grade 3–8 Results and Context Indicators, by School

School	Enrollment	ELA % Level 3–4	Math % Level 3–4	Chronic absenteeism	% economically disadvantaged	Teacher turnover
Elm Street Elementary	480	46%	44%	18%	52%	9%
Harbor Point Elementary	520	51%	49%	15%	44%	7%
Ridgeway Elementary	610	33%	29%	34%	78%	31%
Sunset Park Elementary	455	48%	45%	20%	55%	11%
Central Middle	700	39%	31%	27%	61%	16%
North Middle	660	44%	40%	22%	57%	10%
District (3–8)	3,425	43%	39%	24%	60%	12%

Document 2 – Districtwide Grade 3–8 Results by Student Group (three-year trend)

Student group	ELA 2 yrs ago	ELA last yr	ELA this yr	Math 2 yrs ago	Math last yr	Math this yr
All students	41%	42%	43%	36%	38%	39%
Students with disabilities	13%	13%	14%	11%	12%	12%
English language learners	9%	10%	11%	10%	9%	9%
Economically disadvantaged	31%	32%	33%	26%	27%	28%
Not economically disadvantaged	55%	57%	58%	52%	54%	55%

Note appended by the assistant superintendent: results are reported for all students tested in each school in the spring administration. The district does not currently report results for students enrolled a full academic year.

37. Part 103 · obj 0007 · practice

Two cabinet members conclude from Document 1 that Ridgeway Elementary's leadership should be replaced. Which statement best describes the limitation of that conclusion?

- (A) Ridgeway's results are lower than the other elementary schools', but the difference is not large enough to be meaningful.
- (B) State assessment results may not be used for any personnel purpose in New York.
- (C) The data do not include the school's ELA and math results disaggregated by student group, without which no conclusion about a school is possible.
- (D) A single year of status results, uncontrolled for the school's far higher rates of economic disadvantage, chronic absenteeism and teacher turnover, cannot isolate the contribution of school leadership.

38. Part 103 · obj 0007 · practice

Superintendent Nwosu wants a defensible recommendation for the October board meeting. Which additional information would be most valuable?

- (A) the average years of teaching experience of the faculty at each elementary school
 - (B) growth measures and results limited to students enrolled for a full academic year, together with an analysis of why Ridgeway's teachers are leaving
 - (C) the number of instructional minutes devoted to reading and mathematics at each elementary school
 - (D) parent satisfaction survey results for each elementary school
-

39. Part 103 · obj 0007 · practice

Document 2 shows districtwide results by student group over three years. Which conclusion does it best support?

- (A) The district's overall improvement is real but small, and it is not reaching students with disabilities or English language learners, whose results are essentially flat.
 - (B) The district's achievement gap by economic status has narrowed over three years.
 - (C) English language learners are the district's fastest-improving group in mathematics.
 - (D) The district's instructional program is effective for the majority of students and requires no change.
-

40. Part 103 · obj 0007 · practice

Using Chart 1 alone, which conclusion is best supported?

- (A) Closing Flanders 5 would leave the remaining four schools at approximately 90 percent utilization.
 - (B) Every possible closing leaves the remaining schools below 95 percent utilization.
 - (C) Closing Flanders 3 would leave the district with less elementary capacity than it has students.
 - (D) Flanders 5 should be closed because it has the lowest utilization rate.
-

41. Part 103 · obj 0007 · practice

A superintendent has strong evidence that moving the high school start time later would benefit students, but the transportation director, two coaches and three of seven trustees are opposed and no consensus is emerging. Under these circumstances, the superintendent should:

- (A) abandon the proposal, since a change opposed by transportation and athletics cannot be implemented successfully.
 - (B) define the evidence, the projected costs, the risks and the specific conditions that would cause the district to reverse course, then recommend the change to the board with a monitoring plan.
 - (C) implement the change at one school by administrative action to demonstrate its effects before asking the board to act.
 - (D) continue discussion until all parties agree, since a change of this magnitude requires consensus.
-

42. Part 103 · obj 0008 · official

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

- (A) using a variety of media outlets to explain how the new ELA program is expected to benefit the educational community
 - (B) setting up a library of support materials for school administrators and teachers to use as they adjust to the new ELA program
 - (C) offering ongoing, differentiated professional development to support school staff as they strive to implement the new ELA program
 - (D) specifying a date by which the new ELA program will be expected to be fully implemented in schools throughout the district
-

Scenario – Clearwater Central School District – Identified for Support

Clearwater Central School District enrolls 7,900 students. Under the state accountability system, Clearwater High School has been identified for comprehensive support and improvement; Lincoln Elementary has been identified for targeted support based on the performance of its students with disabilities. The district as a whole has been designated a target district.

Superintendent Vance inherits an improvement planning process that has run on paper. Last year's school comprehensive education plan for Clearwater High listed eleven priorities, twenty-three action steps, and no named owner or completion date for any of them. The plan was written in June by the principal and two assistant principals over three afternoons and submitted the week it was due. Nothing in the plan addresses the ninth-grade course-failure rate, which is the district's single strongest predictor of non-graduation: 34 percent of last year's ninth graders failed at least one core course, and of those students, 71 percent were not on track to graduate on time by the end of tenth grade.

The board has asked Vance for “a real accountability system.” One trustee wants monthly public scorecards for every principal. The high school principal, who is well regarded and in his eighth year, tells Vance that his staff will read monthly public scorecards as a prelude to dismissals and that he will lose the three department chairs who are actually driving the ninth-grade work.

Document 1 – Clearwater High School Cohort Indicators, Four-Year Trend

Indicator	4 yrs ago	3 yrs ago	2 yrs ago	Last yr
Grade 9 students failing 1+ core course	29%	31%	33%	34%
Grade 9 chronic absenteeism	21%	24%	27%	29%
Four-year graduation rate, all students	81%	80%	78%	77%
Four-year graduation rate, students with disabilities	58%	55%	54%	51%
Four-year graduation rate, English language learners	62%	60%	57%	56%
Students earning 10+ credits by end of grade 10	72%	70%	69%	66%

Document 2 – Excerpt, Clearwater High School Comprehensive Education Plan (submitted last June)

Priority 3: “Improve student achievement in all subject areas.”

Action steps: (a) Teachers will use data to inform instruction. (b) Department meetings will focus on student work. (c) Administration will conduct walkthroughs. (d) The school will improve communication with parents. (e) Additional tutoring will be offered.

Resources: Existing staff. **Timeline:** Ongoing, 20XX–20XX school year. **Person responsible:** Building administration.

Evidence of success: Increased student achievement.

43. Part 103 · obj 0008 · practice

Superintendent Vance reviews the excerpt from last year's school comprehensive education plan. Its most fundamental weakness is that:

- (A) it contains five action steps, which is too few for a priority of this scope.
- (B) it was written by the principal and two assistant principals rather than by a committee.
- (C) it does not reference the district's vision statement.
- (D) no action step names a measurable target, a person accountable by name, a date, or the evidence that would show whether it worked.

44. Part 103 · obj 0008 · practice

Which indicator in Document 1 should anchor the district's accountability work with Clearwater High School?

- (A) the four-year graduation rate, because it is the outcome by which the school is publicly judged
- (B) the graduation rate for students with disabilities, because it has declined most steeply
- (C) grade 9 chronic absenteeism, because it is the only indicator that has risen every year
- (D) the grade 9 course-failure rate, because it is a leading indicator that is still actionable for the students currently enrolled

45. Part 103 · obj 0008 · practice

A trustee proposes monthly public scorecards for every principal. Vance's best response to the board is to:

- (A) agree, since public reporting is the most direct way to establish accountability for results.
- (B) decline, explaining that principal performance information is confidential and may not be reported publicly in any form.
- (C) propose that the scorecards be published but that principals' names be omitted.
- (D) propose instead a monthly internal progress review with principals against a small number of named indicators, and a public report to the board twice a year that includes both progress and setbacks.

46. Part 103 · obj 0008 · practice

A district's three-year literacy initiative has produced gains in grades K–2 and no measurable change in grades 3–5. In the annual report to the board and community, the superintendent should:

- (A) report the K–2 gains and note that grades 3–5 data are still being analyzed.
- (B) report the districtwide K–5 average, which shows modest overall improvement.
- (C) report both results plainly, offer the district's current explanation for the difference, and state what will change in grades 3–5 and how progress will be judged.
- (D) postpone reporting until the initiative's third year is complete so that the district reports a full cycle.

47. Part 104 · obj 0001 · official

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

- (A) establishing mandated testing dates for each grade level and curriculum area based on the scope and sequence of the district's curriculum.
- (B) ensuring that assessment is used as an integral tool for making instructional decisions on an ongoing basis.
- (C) establishing a districtwide system of grading in which student grades are based on standard assessment practices and grading criteria.
- (D) ensuring that district schools allow students to choose from a variety of assessment formats to demonstrate their learning.

Scenario – Riverton Central School District – Two Middle Schools, One District

Riverton Central School District enrolls 5,900 students in two middle schools of nearly identical size, Ash Grove and Hollis Park. Both serve grades 6–8, draw from demographically similar attendance zones, and are staffed at the same ratio. Their results are not similar.

Over three years, Ash Grove's grade 8 math proficiency has moved from 34 to 47 percent; Hollis Park's has moved from 36 to 33 percent. Ash Grove enrolls 61 percent of its eighth graders in Algebra I; Hollis Park enrolls 18 percent, and its principal explains that "our kids aren't ready." At Ash Grove, students with disabilities are scheduled into grade-level content with integrated co-teaching in every core subject; at Hollis Park, 40 percent of students with disabilities receive core content in a self-contained setting, and the master schedule places the special class sections opposite the enrichment block, so those students cannot take art, music, or technology.

Assistant Superintendent Okoye spends four days visiting both schools. In Ash Grove classrooms she sees grade-level texts, extended student talk, and teachers circulating with a clipboard. In Hollis Park she sees carefully managed classrooms, worksheets two grade levels below the standard, and a teacher who tells her, kindly, “these students can’t handle the eighth-grade material.”

Hollis Park’s principal is respected, has been in the building fourteen years, and has the strongest staff attendance in the district. When Okoye raises the Algebra I gap, he says he will not “set children up to fail,” and asks whether the district is prepared to pay for the intervention staffing that opening Algebra I would require.

Document 1 – Riverton Middle School Comparison

Indicator	Ash Grove MS	Hollis Park MS
Enrollment	905	880
Economically disadvantaged	54%	57%
Students with disabilities	17%	18%
Grade 8 math proficiency, 3 yrs ago → last yr	34% → 47%	36% → 33%
Grade 8 ELA proficiency, 3 yrs ago → last yr	41% → 50%	43% → 42%
Grade 8 students enrolled in Algebra I	61%	18%
Students with disabilities in general education 80%+ of day	78%	44%
Students with disabilities enrolled in an arts or technology course	91%	52%
Average daily teacher attendance	94.1%	96.8%

48. Part 104 · obj 0001 · practice

Based on Document 1 and Assistant Superintendent Okoye’s classroom visits, the best-supported explanation for the difference between Ash Grove and Hollis Park is that:

- (A) Hollis Park enrolls students who arrive less prepared than students at Ash Grove.
- (B) Hollis Park has a staffing shortage that prevents it from offering Algebra I.
- (C) Ash Grove’s teachers are more experienced and better trained than Hollis Park’s.
- (D) students at Hollis Park have systematically less access to grade-level content, advanced coursework and the full curriculum than comparable students at Ash Grove.

49. Part 104 · obj 0001 · practice

Okoye’s most productive first action with the Hollis Park principal would be to:

- (A) direct him to enroll the same percentage of eighth graders in Algebra I as Ash Grove enrolls, beginning next September.
- (B) reassign him to a district-level position where his organizational strengths can be used without affecting instruction.
- (C) review the two schools’ data with him and with his leadership team, visit Ash Grove classrooms together, and ask him to identify which Hollis Park students are currently denied access to grade-level content and why.
- (D) arrange professional development on high expectations for the entire Hollis Park faculty.

50. Part 104 · obj 0001 · practice

Hollis Park’s master schedule places special class sections opposite the enrichment block, so that students in those sections cannot take art, music or technology. The most accurate characterization of this arrangement is that it:

- Ⓐ is an unavoidable consequence of scheduling in a school of this size.
 - Ⓑ is acceptable provided that the students receive an equivalent amount of instructional time in reading and mathematics.
 - Ⓒ restricts students with disabilities from the general curriculum for reasons of adult convenience rather than individual need, and must be examined against each student’s IEP and least restrictive environment determination.
 - Ⓓ is a building-level matter that should be resolved by the principal without district involvement.
-

51. Part 104 · obj 0001 · practice

The Hollis Park principal asks whether the district is prepared to pay for the intervention staffing that opening Algebra I would require. Okoye’s best response is to:

- Ⓐ state that no additional resources are available and that the school must work within its current allocation.
 - Ⓑ commit to identifying what support is genuinely needed — and to examining how Ash Grove staffs comparable work — while making clear that access to grade-level mathematics is not contingent on new positions.
 - Ⓒ agree to fund whatever staffing the principal requests, since access to Algebra I is a district priority.
 - Ⓓ defer the question to the budget development process in the spring and revisit course enrollment next year.
-

52. Part 104 · obj 0001 · practice

A district’s English language learner enrollment has doubled in four years. Which arrangement best supports these students’ academic achievement?

- Ⓐ placing newly enrolled English language learners in a self-contained newcomer class for their first two years so they can concentrate on language before beginning content instruction
 - Ⓑ assigning bilingual teaching assistants to translate lessons for English language learners in each classroom
 - Ⓒ excusing English language learners from state assessments until they have been enrolled long enough to be tested fairly
 - Ⓓ providing the required language development instruction while keeping students in grade-level content taught by teachers prepared to make that content comprehensible, with content and language teachers planning together
-

53. Part 104 · obj 0001 · adapted

A district has completed a one-to-one device rollout. A year later, walkthroughs show devices used mainly for digital worksheets and online quizzes. The district leader’s most effective response is to:

- Ⓐ purchase a more capable device platform at the next replacement cycle.
 - Ⓑ work with building leaders and teacher-leaders to define what worthwhile technology-supported work looks like in each subject, build professional learning around those examples, and include them in walkthrough look-fors.
 - Ⓒ require each teacher to submit a monthly log of the digital tools used in the classroom.
 - Ⓓ restrict access to the quiz and worksheet applications so that teachers must find other uses.
-

54. Part 104 · obj 0002 · official

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

- Ⓐ communicating clearly to staff the reasons why direct action on their part is needed in responding to the problem of student bullying and harassing
 - Ⓑ revising the criteria used for staff performance evaluations to include behavior and attitudes related to student bullying and harassing
 - Ⓒ initiating a campaign to publicize the problem of student bullying and harassing and to urge staff and others to take appropriate action against this problem
 - Ⓓ providing all staff with explicit training in how to identify and respond to incidents involving student bullying and harassing
-

55. Part 104 · obj 0002 · practice

A Hollis Park teacher tells Okoye, kindly, that “these students can’t handle the eighth-grade material.” The response that best models the district’s expectations is to:

- Ⓐ ask her what evidence would change her mind, arrange for her to see comparable students at Ash Grove doing grade-level work, and be explicit that grade-level content is the district’s expectation for every student.
 - Ⓑ thank the teacher for her candor and move on, since a single comment is not worth a confrontation.
 - Ⓒ report the comment to the principal so that it can be addressed in her next evaluation.
 - Ⓓ explain that state regulations require grade-level instruction and that the district could face consequences if it does not comply.
-

56. Part 104 · obj 0002 · practice

Building leaders in a district report confusion about which decisions are theirs and which belong to central office. The most effective step for the superintendent is to:

- Ⓐ issue a memorandum stating that any decision not expressly delegated remains with central office.
 - Ⓑ hold monthly cabinet meetings at which building leaders may raise questions about specific decisions as they arise.
 - Ⓒ delegate all building-level operational decisions to principals and reserve only budget and personnel matters to central office.
 - Ⓓ work with the leadership team to produce a written decision-rights document naming, for each recurring decision area, who decides, who must be consulted, and who must be informed — and to review it annually.
-

57. Part 104 · obj 0002 · adapted

A board of education member with whom the superintendent has a close working relationship asks the superintendent, as a personal favor, to interview his adult daughter for a posted district position. The superintendent’s most appropriate response is to:

- Ⓐ agree to interview her as a courtesy, since interviewing a candidate commits the district to nothing.
 - Ⓑ withdraw the posting and refill the position later, after the trustee’s term has ended.
 - Ⓒ inform the trustee that district policy makes it illegal for a relative of a board member to be employed by the district.
 - Ⓓ tell the trustee that the position will be filled through the posted process on the merits, that his daughter is free to apply like any other candidate, and that he should disclose the relationship to the board and abstain from any related vote.
-

58. Part 104 · obj 0002 · adapted

One day after the posted deadline for a civil service groundskeeper vacancy, a board of education member hand-delivers his cousin's application to the director of personnel and mentions the relationship. The director should:

- (A) apply the posted deadline as it would be applied to any other applicant, and promptly inform the superintendent of the circumstances of the delivery.
- (B) add the application to the pool, since one day is a negligible delay.
- (C) forward the application to the superintendent with a recommendation that it be considered because of the trustee's interest.
- (D) discard the application without comment to avoid any appearance of favoritism.

59. Part 104 · obj 0002 · adapted

A district code of conduct requires a one-day in-school suspension for any underclass student who leaves campus at lunch. Several student council members recently left campus; referrals were written but the suspensions were never served. Word has spread. Which response is *least* likely to restore the integrity of the district's discipline practice?

- (A) convening a building team of administrators, teachers and parents to review how the code is being applied and to correct inconsistencies
- (B) applying the stated consequence consistently to every student and reporting infractions and consequences to the superintendent monthly
- (C) amending the code of conduct so that students in good academic standing are exempt from the consequence
- (D) scheduling quarterly meetings of district and building administrators to review discipline data and practice

Scenario – Rockridge School District – Dr. Owens' First Months

Reproduced from the official NYSED/Pearson School District Leader Preparation Guide, Part Two.

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

60. Part 104 · obj 0003 · official

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

- (A) initiating a districtwide campaign to alert students' families to the issues and challenge them to take personal action
- (B) seeking guidance from school and community stakeholder groups in defining ways in which school programs and services can better address current needs
- (C) creating a resource center to provide additional assistance to students in job- and career-related skills such as résumé building and interviewing strategies
- (D) requesting the cooperation of the district governing body in expanding funding for the various student support services offered in the schools

Scenario – Northpoint Central School District – Students the System Is Losing

Northpoint Central School District enrolls 6,800 students in a small city and the towns around it. Assistant Superintendent Deng is asked to bring the cabinet a recommendation on student supports after a difficult board meeting at which three families described a child who "fell through the cracks."

Deng pulls the data. Chronic absenteeism districtwide is 26 percent, up from 17 percent four years ago, and is concentrated in grades 9 and 10 and in kindergarten. Out-of-school suspensions total 612 for the year; students with disabilities are 15 percent of enrollment and 39 percent of suspensions. The district employs one social worker for every 1,100 students and one school counselor for every 410. Sixty-one students are identified as homeless under McKinney-Vento, more than double the count three years ago, and the district's homeless liaison is the assistant superintendent's secretary, who was designated for the role four years ago and has had no training.

Three programs already exist and none of them talk to each other: a grant-funded mentoring program at the high school, a county mental health clinic that runs a satellite office in one middle school two days a week, and an attendance-improvement effort run out of the elementary principals' office that consists of letters sent home at 10, 15, and 20 absences. No one in the district can produce a list of students served by more than one of them.

The county department of social services has written asking the district to designate a single point of contact.

Document 1 – Attendance, Discipline, and Support Staffing Indicators

Indicator	4 yrs ago	Last yr	Comparable districts (median)
Chronic absenteeism, all students	17%	26%	19%
Chronic absenteeism, grade 9	22%	38%	24%
Chronic absenteeism, kindergarten	19%	31%	20%
Out-of-school suspensions (total incidents)	430	612	—
Share of suspensions: students with disabilities (15% of enrollment)	33%	39%	—
Students per social worker	1,360	1,100	640
Students per school counselor	455	410	375
Students identified as homeless (McKinney-Vento)	28	61	—

Document 2 – Letter from the County Commissioner of Social Services

Dear Superintendent:

Our caseworkers report that when they attempt to coordinate services for a Northpoint student they are routed among four different offices and frequently receive no return call. In two recent cases involving children in foster care, school records were not transferred for more than three weeks after placement.

We are asking the district to designate a single point of contact for interagency referrals and to join the county's quarterly children's services coordinating table. We are prepared to co-locate a caseworker in a district building one day per week at no cost to the district if a confidential space can be identified and an information-sharing agreement executed.

61. Part 104 · obj 0003 · practice

Assistant Superintendent Deng must recommend a course of action to the cabinet. Which step should come first?

- Ⓐ requesting board approval to add three social work positions in the next budget
- Ⓑ expanding the attendance letter protocol to grades 9 and 10, where chronic absenteeism is highest
- Ⓒ mapping the students served by each of the three existing programs, identifying who is served by more than one and who is served by none, and clarifying which office is accountable for each function
- Ⓓ contracting with an outside provider to deliver a districtwide social-emotional learning curriculum

62. Part 104 · obj 0003 · practice

The district's homeless liaison is a secretary designated four years ago who has received no training, while the number of students identified as homeless has more than doubled. Under the McKinney-Vento Act, the district must ensure that:

- (A) students in temporary housing are enrolled in the school nearest their current residence to minimize transportation costs.
 - (B) a designated liaison ensures that students in temporary housing are identified, enrolled immediately even without records normally required, and able to remain in the school of origin when that is in their best interest, with transportation provided.
 - (C) students in temporary housing are enrolled once the district receives proof of residency and immunization records.
 - (D) students in temporary housing are served by the county department of social services rather than by the district.
-

63. Part 104 · obj 0003 · practice

The county has offered to co-locate a caseworker in a district building one day per week at no cost if confidential space is identified and an information-sharing agreement is executed. Deng's best recommendation is to:

- (A) decline, because student record confidentiality prevents a district from sharing information with an outside agency.
 - (B) accept the caseworker but decline the information-sharing agreement so that no student records leave the district.
 - (C) accept the offer and direct principals to give the caseworker access to the student information system so that referrals can be made efficiently.
 - (D) accept the offer, identify space and negotiate an information-sharing agreement with counsel that specifies what may be shared, with whom, and on what consent.
-

64. Part 104 · obj 0003 · practice

Kindergarten chronic absenteeism has risen from 19 to 31 percent. The most appropriate district response is to:

- (A) treat it as a lower priority than grade 9, since attendance is not compulsory at that age in New York and the academic stakes are lower.
 - (B) refer families whose kindergartners exceed the chronic absenteeism threshold to the county for educational neglect assessment.
 - (C) investigate the causes at the family and building level — transportation, child care, health, and whether families understand that attendance in the early grades predicts later reading outcomes — and design responses accordingly.
 - (D) adopt an attendance incentive program with recognition for classes achieving the highest monthly attendance.
-

65. Part 104 · obj 0003 · adapted

A third-grade teacher overhears students discussing a gun and finds a loaded handgun in a student's desk. She takes the weapon to the principal, who telephones the superintendent. The superintendent's first direction to the principal should be to:

- (A) suspend the student immediately for the maximum period the code of conduct allows.
 - (B) telephone the student's parent or guardian and ask them to come to the school.
 - (C) notify law enforcement immediately, secure the area, and account for the students in the classroom.
 - (D) bring the weapon to the district office so that the superintendent can confirm whether it is operable.
-

66. Part 104 · obj 0004 · official

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

- Ⓐ begin an ongoing dialogue with district administrators and faculty to support innovation and leadership at the building level to meet the new challenges.
- Ⓑ send an open letter to administrators and faculty acknowledging the problems the district is facing and outlining her plans for addressing these problems.
- Ⓒ convene a meeting of senior faculty and staff members for the purpose of clarifying the attitudes and behavior she expects from them as leaders within the district.
- Ⓓ arrange for district faculty and staff members to attend a series of professional development seminars on how to achieve a sense of empowerment in the workplace.

67. Part 104 · obj 0004 · official

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

- Ⓐ taking steps to protect building leaders from extraneous demands and to ensure that they do not feel isolated
- Ⓑ instituting districtwide policies to limit the amount of overtime put in by building leaders
- Ⓒ finding ways to encourage building leaders to keep sight of the district vision and to renew their commitment to it
- Ⓓ frequently expressing gratitude, both in public and in private, for the work done by individual building leaders

Scenario – Granite Falls Central School District – A First-Year Principal in Trouble

Granite Falls Central School District enrolls 3,400 students. Superintendent Ibrahim supervises five building leaders directly. One of them, Ms. Cardoso, is in her first year as principal of Granite Falls Middle School, promoted from assistant principal in the same building after a national search produced no acceptable external candidate.

By December, Ibrahim has three sources of concern. Cardoso's first-quarter observation write-ups are timely but generic; five of the eleven she has completed contain identical narrative paragraphs. The middle school's office referral count is up 40 percent over last year, and two veteran teachers have told the assistant superintendent for human resources, informally, that Cardoso "isn't visible." At the same time, Cardoso has done things no previous middle school principal did: she rebuilt the master schedule to create a common planning period for each grade-level team, and she is the only principal in the district who brings student work to her monthly meeting with Ibrahim.

Cardoso works from 6:30 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. most days. At her mid-year conference she tells Ibrahim she is "drowning in the building" and that she has not had a substantive conversation with another principal since August. The district has no administrator mentoring program. Granite Falls has hired four new principals in three years; two left within two years, both citing isolation.

The board president has heard the "isn't visible" comment secondhand and asks Ibrahim at a committee meeting whether the district "made a mistake."

68. Part 104 · obj 0004 · practice

At her mid-year conference, Ms. Cardoso tells Superintendent Ibrahim that she is “drowning in the building” and has not had a substantive conversation with another principal since August. Ibrahim’s most effective response is to:

- Ⓐ reassure her that the first year is difficult for every principal and that the feeling will pass.
 - Ⓑ assign an experienced mentor principal, protect a recurring block of time for principals to work together on shared problems, and review with her which district demands on her calendar can be removed or deferred.
 - Ⓒ assign an assistant principal from another building to Granite Falls Middle School for the remainder of the year.
 - Ⓓ reduce the number of formal observations she is required to complete this year so that her workload is manageable.
-

69. Part 104 · obj 0004 · practice

Five of the eleven observation write-ups Cardoso has completed contain identical narrative paragraphs. Ibrahim’s best response is to:

- Ⓐ direct her to rewrite the five write-ups before they are placed in personnel files.
 - Ⓑ reassign responsibility for teacher observation at the middle school to the assistant principal.
 - Ⓒ note the concern in her own annual evaluation so there is a record if the pattern continues.
 - Ⓓ conduct joint observations with her, compare the evidence each of them recorded, and build her feedback and evidence-collection skill against the district’s evaluation criteria.
-

70. Part 104 · obj 0004 · practice

The board president has heard secondhand that Cardoso “isn’t visible” and asks Ibrahim at a committee meeting whether the district made a mistake. Ibrahim’s best response is to:

- Ⓐ agree that the appointment was premature and describe how the district will proceed if performance does not improve.
 - Ⓑ explain that personnel performance is the superintendent’s responsibility, describe in general terms the support and supervision structure in place for first-year principals, and offer to report on administrator induction and retention at a future meeting.
 - Ⓒ share the specific concerns from the observation write-ups and the office referral data so that the board has full information.
 - Ⓓ state that the comments came from two teachers with a history of complaint and should be disregarded.
-

71. Part 104 · obj 0004 · practice

A superintendent delegates management of a districtwide curriculum revision to an assistant superintendent. Which action best reflects delegating authority without abrogating responsibility?

- Ⓐ stating the outcome, the boundaries and the decision rights, agreeing on a reporting rhythm, and remaining accountable to the board for the result
 - Ⓑ transferring the project and asking to be informed only if a serious problem arises
 - Ⓒ requiring the assistant superintendent to obtain approval before each decision so that the superintendent retains control
 - Ⓓ co-chairing the project so that the superintendent is present for all major decisions
-

72. Part 104 · obj 0005 · official

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

- (A) student records that illustrate the teacher's inability to provide adequate instruction
- (B) documentation of actions taken in an effort to remediate the teacher's weaknesses
- (C) a record of all disciplinary actions taken against the teacher by the building leader
- (D) evidence of one or more actions by the teacher that are in conflict with the district's code of conduct

Scenario – Seneca Ridge Central School District – Professional Learning That Is Not Working

Seneca Ridge Central School District enrolls 4,600 students and spends \$412,000 a year on professional learning: four superintendent's conference days, a summer institute, conference attendance, and a contract with an outside consultant who has presented at the district's opening day for six consecutive years.

Superintendent Lin surveys certificated staff in January. The results are unambiguous. Sixty-eight percent of teachers report that the professional learning they received this year was "not useful" or "somewhat useful." The most common written comment is a version of "we hear about it once and never again." Teachers who participated in the district's two-year literacy coaching cycle rate their learning far higher than those who attended only whole-group sessions. The district's professional development plan, required by regulation and adopted annually by the board, was written by the assistant superintendent alone and has changed by fewer than fifty words in four years.

Two other facts matter. Twenty-two of the district's 340 teachers are in their first three years and are entitled to mentoring; the district's mentoring program pairs them with a volunteer but provides no release time and no training for mentors. And nine teachers hold professional certificates that will lapse if they do not complete their continuing teacher and leader education hours; the district has no system for tracking who is at risk.

The board's budget committee has proposed cutting the professional learning line by 30 percent because "the survey says it isn't working."

Document 1 – Professional Learning Survey Results (340 certificated staff, 271 responses)

Format	Participants	Rated "very useful"	Reported changing practice as a result	Cost per participant
Opening-day whole-group keynote	340	9%	4%	\$79
Conference day, choice workshops	340	27%	19%	\$115
Summer institute (3 days, voluntary)	64	58%	44%	\$610
Two-year literacy coaching cycle	48	81%	76%	\$1,240
Out-of-district conference attendance	37	46%	22%	\$1,480

73. Part 104 · obj 0005 · practice

Which conclusion is best supported by the professional learning survey results in Document 1?

- (A) The district spends too much on professional learning and should reduce the total allocation.
 - (B) Out-of-district conference attendance is the district's most cost-effective professional learning investment.
 - (C) Teachers prefer voluntary professional learning to required professional learning.
 - (D) Sustained, job-embedded formats change practice at far higher rates than one-time whole-group sessions, and the district's spending is concentrated in the formats that change practice least.
-

74. Part 104 · obj 0005 · practice

The board's budget committee proposes cutting the professional learning line by 30 percent because "the survey says it isn't working." Superintendent Lin's best response is to:

- (A) accept the reduction and absorb it by eliminating the summer institute and out-of-district conference attendance.
 - (B) propose holding the total roughly level while shifting spending from keynotes and conference attendance toward coaching cycles and mentoring, and commit to reporting change-in-practice results annually.
 - (C) oppose any reduction on the ground that professional learning is required by regulation.
 - (D) propose a 30 percent reduction taken proportionally across every professional learning category.
-

75. Part 104 · obj 0005 · practice

Twenty-two Seneca Ridge teachers are in their first three years. The district's mentoring program pairs each with a volunteer but provides no release time and no mentor training. The most important improvement is to:

- (A) increase the stipend paid to mentors so that more experienced teachers volunteer.
 - (B) assign each new teacher to a mentor in the same building and grade level.
 - (C) train mentors in observation and coaching, provide scheduled time for mentor and mentee to observe each other and meet, and define what the mentoring is meant to accomplish.
 - (D) require new teachers to submit a monthly log of their meetings with their mentor.
-

76. Part 104 · obj 0005 · practice

Nine Seneca Ridge teachers hold professional certificates and are at risk of not completing their required continuing teacher and leader education (CTLE) hours. The district's most appropriate action is to:

- (A) build a district system that tracks CTLE completion for all affected staff, notifies individuals well before the end of the registration period, and ensures that district-sponsored learning is offered by an approved sponsor and properly recorded.
 - (B) notify the nine teachers that maintaining their certificates is an individual professional responsibility and take no further action.
 - (C) require the nine teachers to complete their remaining hours at their own expense before the end of the school year.
 - (D) count all district professional development days toward the requirement automatically.
-

77. Part 104 · obj 0005 · adapted

A director of personnel assembles the file of teachers reaching the end of their probationary period, and the superintendent decides to recommend that one probationary teacher not be granted tenure. Which of the following statements about that recommendation is accurate in New York?

- (A) The superintendent must first obtain the concurrence of the teachers' association before recommending that a probationary teacher be denied tenure.
- (B) A probationary teacher may be denied tenure only after a hearing conducted under the statutory disciplinary procedure for tenured teachers.
- (C) A probationary teacher who has completed three years of service is automatically entitled to tenure unless charges of misconduct are filed.
- (D) The superintendent may recommend discontinuing a probationary teacher's services before the end of the probationary period, with the notice the law and any applicable agreement require, provided the reason is not an unlawful one such as race, religion, age, sex, disability, or protected union activity.

78. Part 104 · obj 0006 · official

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

- (A) The team leader and the district's human resources director analyze the questionnaire results and prepare recommendations for the team.
- (B) The team reviews and analyzes the results of the questionnaire in order to identify perceived areas of strength in team functioning.
- (C) The team leader analyzes the results of the questionnaire, then introduces appropriate changes to improve team functioning.
- (D) The team analyzes and discusses the results of the questionnaire, then plans action steps to improve weak areas of team functioning.

Scenario – Bayfield Union Free School District – Operating Without a Contract

The collective bargaining agreement between the Bayfield Union Free School District and the Bayfield Teachers' Association expired on June 30. Negotiations have produced agreement on eleven items and impasse on salary and on a district proposal to add twenty minutes to the elementary instructional day. Superintendent Okonkwo is the board's chief negotiator.

Three situations land on Okonkwo's desk in October. First, the association has notified members that they will work "contract hours only," and teachers have stopped attending evening open houses and the parent organization's fall events, which they have historically attended voluntarily. The parent organization president is furious and wants Okonkwo to "make them come."

Second, the high school principal proposes solving a staffing problem by assigning two teachers an additional section in place of their duty period, and asks whether he needs to check with anyone.

Third, the district's director of facilities reports that the custodial unit — a separate bargaining unit — has filed a grievance over the district's decision to contract out summer floor refinishing to a private vendor for \$61,000, work the unit has performed for the past eleven years.

The board president asks Okonkwo three questions at a committee meeting: whether the district can simply impose its last offer, whether teacher salaries are frozen now that the agreement has expired, and whether the district can require unit members to attend evening events while negotiations continue.

Document 1 – Memorandum from District Labor Counsel (excerpt)

Re: Status of terms and conditions following expiration of the agreement

Under the Taylor Law, the district and the association are obligated to negotiate in good faith over mandatory subjects — wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment. Neither party may unilaterally change a mandatory subject while negotiations continue. If the parties reach impasse, the Public Employment Relations Board may appoint a mediator, and if mediation does not resolve the impasse, a fact-finder may be appointed to issue recommendations. Public employees may not strike.

The expired agreement's terms continue in effect until a new agreement is negotiated, including contractual salary increment payments. The district should not represent to the community that salaries are “frozen.”

Voluntary, uncompensated activities that unit members have historically performed outside the contractual workday are not, without more, enforceable obligations. The district should be careful to distinguish between contractually required duties and voluntary participation in this communication and every other.

79. Part 104 · obj 0006 · practice

The board president asks Superintendent Okonkwo whether the district can simply impose its last offer and whether salaries are frozen now that the agreement has expired. The accurate answer is that:

- (A) the district may implement its last, best offer once impasse is declared, and salaries are frozen until a new agreement is ratified.
- (B) the terms of the expired agreement continue in effect, including contractual increments; the district may not unilaterally change a mandatory subject of negotiation, and unresolved impasse proceeds to mediation and, if necessary, fact-finding.
- (C) the district may impose new terms only after the association has exhausted its right to strike.
- (D) the board may adopt the district's proposal by resolution, at which point it becomes binding on the association.

80. Part 104 · obj 0006 · adapted

The parent organization president demands that Okonkwo require teachers to resume attending evening open houses and fall events, which they have historically attended voluntarily. Okonkwo's best response is to:

- (A) direct probationary teachers to attend, since their continued service is subject to the board's discretion.
- (B) notify the association that attendance at these events is an established past practice and that the district expects it to continue.
- (C) cancel the events until the negotiation is settled so that families are not disappointed again.
- (D) explain to the parent organization that these events have been attended voluntarily and outside the contractual workday, that the district cannot compel attendance on that basis, and work with the organization to keep families connected during the negotiation.

81. Part 104 · obj 0006 · practice

The high school principal proposes assigning two teachers an additional instructional section in place of their duty period and asks whether he needs to check with anyone. Okonkwo should tell him to:

- (A) proceed, since assignment of staff within the building is the principal's prerogative.
- (B) review the collective bargaining agreement's provisions on teaching load and assignment with the assistant superintendent for human resources before making any change, and raise it with the association if the agreement does not clearly permit it.
- (C) proceed but notify the association after the assignments take effect.
- (D) propose the change at the bargaining table as part of the current negotiation.

82. Part 104 · obj 0006 · practice

The custodial unit has grieved the district's decision to contract out summer floor refinishing, work its members have performed for eleven years. Okonkwo's most appropriate first step is to:

- (A) process the grievance through the steps in the custodial agreement, gather the facts on cost, past practice and the agreement's language, and obtain advice of counsel before responding.
- (B) rescind the contract with the vendor to avoid a protracted dispute.
- (C) deny the grievance on the ground that management has the exclusive right to determine how work is performed.
- (D) offer the custodial unit the opportunity to perform the work at the vendor's price.

83. Part 104 · obj 0006 · adapted

A superintendent reviewing shared decision-making across the district finds untrained members, teams without stated goals, no clarity about the scope of each team's role, and no year-end self-assessment. He engages a consultant to train the teams. Which of the following should *not* be part of that training?

- (A) clarifying the responsibilities of individual team members
- (B) defining the scope and limits of each team's role
- (C) instructing teams to take their direction and priorities from the building principal
- (D) establishing goals, operating procedures and a means of assessing the team's own effectiveness

84. Part 104 · obj 0007 · official

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

- (A) directing district staff to investigate and identify the specific needs and inadequacies of each building.
- (B) arranging for stakeholder groups to tour new and remodeled school buildings similar to those in the district that require repair.
- (C) submitting an initial request to the district governing body seeking fiscal support for a construction proposal.
- (D) forming a broad-based committee of stakeholders to begin the process of selecting a knowledgeable and experienced construction consultant.

Scenario – Lakeview Union Free School District – Building a Budget Against the Levy Limit

Lakeview Union Free School District enrolls 5,250 students. Superintendent Marchetti and the assistant superintendent for business present a proposed budget to the board's finance committee in March. Spending rises 4.1 percent, driven by a 9 percent health insurance premium increase, three new special education classroom sections required by CSE recommendations, and the first year of debt service on a voter-approved capital project.

The district's own tax levy limit calculation, filed with the State Comptroller, yields an allowable levy of \$42,024,000. The proposed budget carries a levy of \$42,536,000 — \$512,000 above the limit. To close the gap without exceeding the limit, the assistant superintendent proposes appropriating \$2,700,000 of fund balance, up from \$2,000,000 this year, and drawing \$400,000 from the district's employee benefit accrued liability reserve to cover a portion of retirement payouts.

Two other facts sit on the table. The district's unassigned general fund balance at the close of last year was \$3,600,000. And the district's five-year capital facilities plan, last updated three years ago, identifies roof replacements at two elementary schools that the building condition survey rated as needing attention within five years; neither is in the proposed budget.

The board is divided. Three trustees want the budget presented as proposed and a public campaign for the supermajority. Two want spending cut to stay at the levy limit. One asks what happens if the budget fails twice.

Document 1 – Proposed Budget by Component (Education Law three-part budget)

Component	Current year adopted	Proposed	\$ change	% change
Program	\$58,420,000	\$60,905,000	\$2,485,000	4.3%
Administrative	\$6,140,000	\$6,290,000	\$150,000	2.4%
Capital	\$9,300,000	\$9,720,000	\$420,000	4.5%
Total	\$73,860,000	\$76,915,000	\$3,055,000	4.1%

Document 2 – Proposed Revenue and Levy Limit Summary

Revenue source	Current year	Proposed
State aid	\$28,300,000	\$29,150,000
Real property tax levy	\$41,200,000	\$42,536,000
Other revenue (tuition, interest, miscellaneous)	\$2,360,000	\$2,529,000
Appropriated fund balance	\$2,000,000	\$2,700,000
Total revenue	\$73,860,000	\$76,915,000

District tax levy limit calculation as filed: allowable levy limit **\$42,024,000**. Proposed levy **\$42,536,000**. Amount above the limit: **\$512,000**.
Unassigned general fund balance at June 30 last year: **\$3,600,000**.

85. Part 104 · obj 0007 · practice

The proposed levy of \$42,536,000 exceeds the district's calculated tax levy limit of \$42,024,000. Which statement about the consequence is accurate?

- (A) The board may not present a budget with a levy above the calculated limit.
- (B) The board may adopt the higher levy without a vote if it first declares a fiscal emergency.
- (C) The budget may be presented with the higher levy, but it requires approval by at least 60 percent of the votes cast, and the required budget notice must state that the levy exceeds the limit.
- (D) The higher levy requires approval by a simple majority, but the excess amount must be placed in reserve.

86. Part 104 · obj 0007 · practice

Lakeview's unassigned general fund balance at the close of last year was \$3,600,000 against a proposed budget of \$76,915,000. The most accurate observation for the superintendent to make to the board is that:

- (A) the unassigned balance appears to exceed the statutory limit of 4 percent of the ensuing year's budget, and the district must plan how it will be applied or otherwise addressed.
- (B) the balance is prudent and should be increased further to protect the district's credit rating.
- (C) unassigned fund balance is unrestricted and may be carried at any level the board considers appropriate.
- (D) the balance should be transferred into a capital reserve by board resolution before the end of the fiscal year.

87. Part 104 · obj 0007 · practice

A trustee asks what happens if voters defeat the budget twice. The accurate answer is that the board:

- (A) must adopt a contingency budget, under which the tax levy may not exceed the prior year's levy and certain expenditures, including most equipment purchases, are restricted.
- (B) may present the same budget a third time at a special district meeting held within 30 days.
- (C) may adopt its originally proposed budget by resolution, since the district must operate.
- (D) must reduce the budget by 10 percent and present the reduced budget to voters again.

88. Part 104 · obj 0007 · practice

The proposed budget increases appropriated fund balance from \$2,000,000 to \$2,700,000 and draws \$400,000 from a reserve to cover retirement payouts, in order to support recurring costs including three new special education sections. The most important point for the superintendent to make to the board is that:

- (A) using fund balance and reserves is a routine and appropriate way to hold down the tax levy in a difficult year.
- (B) one-time and non-recurring revenue is being used to fund recurring obligations, which enlarges the gap the district must close next year unless spending or recurring revenue changes.
- (C) the appropriation of fund balance should be increased further so that the levy can be brought within the limit entirely.
- (D) reserve funds may be used for any purpose the board designates by resolution.

89. Part 104 · obj 0007 · practice

The board asks whether closing an elementary school will in fact save \$1.1 million. The most accurate assessment of Chart 2 is that it:

- (A) is reliable, because operations, staffing, and supplies are the three categories in which closing a building produces savings.
- (B) understates the savings, because it does not include the proceeds from selling the closed building.
- (C) cannot be evaluated without knowing which school the superintendent intends to recommend.
- (D) presents a single generic estimate that is not specific to any building and omits offsetting costs such as added transportation, renovation of receiving schools, and any staff whose positions follow the students.

90. Part 104 · obj 0007 · practice

Which consideration raised by Chart 3 must the board address before deciding on any closing?

- (A) whether the closing would leave the remaining elementary schools more racially and ethnically concentrated than they are today, and how attendance zones would be redrawn to avoid that result
- (B) whether families in the closed school's attendance zone would prefer a different receiving school
- (C) whether the district's overall enrollment by race and ethnicity would change as a result of the closing
- (D) whether the closed building could be leased to a community organization serving the same population

91. Part 104 · obj 0008 · official

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

- (A) an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that enables the student to achieve to his or her maximum potential.
- (B) special education and related services that match or surpass a federally mandated array of services defined for the student's disability.
- (C) an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that is tailored to meet the student's unique needs.
- (D) special education and related services that will be of at least minimal educational benefit to the student.

Scenario – Port Hollis Central School District – The Compliance Review

Port Hollis Central School District enrolls 8,200 students. Superintendent Reddick has asked each central office administrator to bring a one-page compliance status report to the September cabinet meeting, ahead of an anticipated state review of the district's special education programs.

What comes back is uneven. Initial evaluations are being completed within the required timeline in only 82 percent of cases; the director of special education attributes this to two vacant school psychologist positions. Annual reviews are at 94 percent. Six students have IEPs recommending consultant teacher services that the building has been delivering as small-group pull-out because of a scheduling conflict.

Two other matters surface at the same meeting. A high school assistant principal received a written report last Thursday from a parent alleging that a coach struck a student during practice; the assistant principal put the report in a file and scheduled a meeting with the coach for next week. And a first-grade teacher told her principal on Monday that a child arrived with bruising and said “my mother’s boyfriend did it”; the principal told the teacher he would “handle it” and asked her not to call anyone.

Reddick also learns that the districtwide school safety plan has not been brought to a public hearing in two years, and that the building-level emergency response plan for the high school was posted in full on the school’s public website by a well-meaning assistant principal.

Document 1 – Special Education Compliance Indicators, Port Hollis CSD

Indicator	District result	Requirement
Initial evaluations completed within 60 school days of consent	82%	100%
Annual reviews held on or before the annual review date	94%	100%
IEPs implemented as written (program review sample, n=60)	90%	100%
Preschool students transitioned to CPSE/CSE on time	88%	100%
Students with disabilities educated in general education 80% or more of the day	51%	State target 63%
Out-of-school suspensions, students with disabilities	3.1x rate of nondisabled peers	Disproportionality review threshold

92. Part 104 · obj 0008 · practice

A high school assistant principal received a written report last Thursday from a parent alleging that a coach struck a student during practice. He filed the report and scheduled a meeting with the coach for next week. Superintendent Reddick should recognize that:

- (A) the assistant principal acted correctly by gathering information from the coach before escalating the matter.
- (B) because the alleged conduct occurred during an athletic practice, the matter is handled under the district’s athletic code rather than as a report of abuse.
- (C) an allegation of child abuse in an educational setting must be moved promptly — the administrator was required to forward the report to the superintendent, and law enforcement must be notified promptly; the district may not sit on it while it conducts its own inquiry.
- (D) the report should be referred to the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment, which handles allegations against school employees.

93. Part 104 · obj 0008 · practice

A first-grade teacher told her principal that a child arrived with bruising and said “my mother’s boyfriend did it.” The principal told the teacher he would handle it and asked her not to call anyone. Which statement is accurate?

- (A) The teacher is a mandated reporter who must herself report the suspicion directly to the Statewide Central Register; a supervisor cannot relieve her of that duty or bar her from reporting.
- (B) The teacher satisfied her obligation by reporting to the principal, who is now the responsible reporter.
- (C) The teacher should report only if she personally observes further evidence of abuse.
- (D) The principal is correct that reports must be routed through the building administrator to avoid duplicate calls.

94. Part 104 · obj 0008 · practice

An assistant principal posted the high school's building-level emergency response plan in full on the school website. The most accurate response is that:

- (A) the posting is appropriate, since families are entitled to know how the school will respond in an emergency.
 - (B) the posting is acceptable provided that staff names and telephone numbers are redacted.
 - (C) the plan may remain posted because it was approved by the board of education in open session.
 - (D) building-level emergency response plans are confidential and are not for public disclosure; the plan should be removed, while the districtwide school safety plan is the document developed with public participation and made available to the public.
-

95. Part 104 · obj 0008 · practice

Initial special education evaluations are being completed within the required timeline in only 82 percent of cases, which the director attributes to two vacant school psychologist positions. Reddick's most appropriate response is to:

- (A) treat the shortfall as a compliance failure the district must cure now — contracting for evaluation capacity or using approved independent evaluators while recruitment continues — and report the plan and timeline to the board.
 - (B) accept the explanation, since a district cannot complete evaluations without qualified staff.
 - (C) ask the director to prioritize the evaluations of students whose parents have raised concerns.
 - (D) extend the district's internal evaluation timeline until the vacancies are filled.
-

96. Part 104 · obj 0008 · adapted

A public school teacher was dismissed after writing a letter to a local newspaper criticizing the board of education and the superintendent over the district's allocation of funds between athletics and academics. The state's highest court upheld the dismissal. On review, the United States Supreme Court:

- (A) reversed, holding that a teacher speaking as a citizen on a matter of public concern is protected, and that the employee's interest in commenting must be balanced against the district's interest in efficient operation.
 - (B) upheld the dismissal, holding that a district may discharge a teacher whose public criticism undermines confidence in district leadership.
 - (C) upheld the dismissal because some statements in the letter were inaccurate.
 - (D) ordered the teacher suspended without pay for sixty days and then reinstated.
-

97. Part 104 · obj 0008 · adapted

An untenured teacher who served as union president was not rehired. The record included an obscene gesture toward students, an argument with cafeteria staff, and a telephone call in which he gave the substance of a memorandum about a teacher dress code to a radio station, which broadcast it as news. The district cited "a notable lack of tact in handling professional matters." The United States Supreme Court held that:

- (A) the dismissal was proper because an untenured teacher has no protected interest in continued employment.
 - (B) the dismissal was proper because the teacher's overall conduct was unbecoming a professional.
 - (C) the call to the radio station was protected speech, but the district may still prevail if it shows by a preponderance of the evidence that it would have made the same decision even in the absence of the protected conduct; the case was returned to the lower courts to apply that test.
 - (D) the teacher was protected from non-renewal because he held office in the employees' association.
-

98. Part 104 · obj 0008 · adapted

A deaf kindergarten student's IEP provided an FM hearing aid, daily instruction from a tutor for the deaf, and speech therapy several times a week. She was performing above grade level and advancing from grade to grade. Her parents sought a full-time sign language interpreter in all classes; the district, after a trial period, concluded she did not require one. The parents sued. The United States Supreme Court:

- Ⓐ ruled for the district, holding that a free appropriate public education requires an IEP reasonably calculated to enable the child to receive educational benefit, not services that maximize potential.
 - Ⓑ ruled for the parents, holding that a district must provide services that allow a student to achieve her full potential.
 - Ⓒ declined to decide the case, leaving the question to the states.
 - Ⓓ ruled for the parents, holding that any service requested by parents and denied by a district must be provided pending review.
-

99. Part 104 · obj 0008 · adapted

A high school student had a sexual relationship with a teacher. When it was discovered, the district terminated the teacher. The district had not adopted or distributed a grievance procedure for sexual harassment complaints, and no district official with authority to act had been told of the relationship before it was discovered. The student sued the district for damages under Title IX. The United States Supreme Court held that:

- Ⓐ the district was liable because it failed to provide adequate supervision on school property.
 - Ⓑ the district was liable because the absence of a required grievance procedure is itself a violation for which damages may be awarded.
 - Ⓒ the district was not liable for damages, because an official with authority to institute corrective measures must have had actual notice of the misconduct and been deliberately indifferent to it.
 - Ⓓ the district was liable unless it could show the student consented to the relationship.
-

PART VII

Recall Cards

225 recall cards in nine decks. Questions and hints only — the answers are in the SDL Answer Key under the same codes. Say the whole answer out loud before you check it.

Framework & Blueprint FW 24 CARDS

The 16 objectives, item counts, weights, word counts and task types - the blueprint recited cold.

FW-1

How many selected-response items are on each part of the SDL assessment, and what share of the score do they carry?

Hint: Same count on 103 and 104; the split with the written section is even.

FW-2

Name the two subareas of Part One (test code 103) and the objective range of each.

Hint: Vision first, then change and accountability.

FW-3

How are the 60 multiple-choice items on Part One divided between its two subareas?

Hint: Part One is the symmetrical one.

FW-4

Name the two subareas of Part Two (test code 104) and the objective range of each.

Hint: Five objectives in one, three in the other.

FW-5

How are the 60 multiple-choice items on Part Two divided between its two subareas?

Hint: Not 30/30 - the instructional side is bigger.

FW-6

On each part, how many written assignments are there and what is each one worth?

Hint: They are not equal to each other.

FW-7

What are the two written-assignment word ranges, and which assignment gets which?

Hint: The short one is always first-numbered.

FW-8

Name the two written-assignment task types on Part One (103) in order.

Hint: One asks you to produce a document; the other asks you to judge a superintendent.

FW-9

Name the two written-assignment task types on Part Two (104) in order.

Hint: The long one is the multi-document task.

FW-10

Which subarea does each Part Two written assignment come from, and why is that order counter-intuitive?

Hint: The bigger task comes from the bigger subarea, which is the first one.

FW-11

Which subarea does each Part One written assignment come from?

Hint: Here the short task and the first subarea line up.

FW-12

State the titles of Part One objectives 0001 through 0004.

Hint: Leadership, vision, communication, collaboration.

FW-13

State the titles of Part One objectives 0005 through 0008.

Hint: Change, planning, data, accountability.

FW-14

State the titles of Part Two objectives 0001 through 0005.

Hint: Learning, standards, students, adults, growth.

FW-15

State the titles of Part Two objectives 0006 through 0008.

Hint: Operations, money and buildings, compliance.

FW-16

Which single objective names the board of education, the structure of public school governance, BOCES, and the NYS Code of Ethics for Educators?

Hint: It is on 103, and it is the first thing the framework says.

FW-17

Which objective owns district budgeting, school finance, facilities and emergency management?

Hint: Part Two, Subarea II, the middle one.

FW-18

Which objective owns education case law, statutes and regulations, reporting requirements, and child abuse reporting?

Hint: The last objective on the last subarea.

FW-19

Which objective owns collective bargaining and contract management?

Hint: Not the finance objective, and not the compliance objective.

FW-20

Which objective owns succession planning - identifying, mentoring and promoting future leaders?

Hint: It sits with long-range planning, which surprises people.

FW-21

Which objective owns equitable allocation of resources to schools and support services for students with disabilities, English language learners and at-risk students?

Hint: Part Two, Subarea I, the third one - support to students.

FW-22

What is the passing score on each part of the SDL assessment, and how are the parts scored?

Hint: Not the SBL scale - this is a different number entirely.

FW-23

How much testing time does each part of the SDL allow, and what is added on top of it?

Hint: Four hours of work, a quarter hour of setup.

FW-24

What is the vintage of the SDL framework, and what standards set is it written to?

Hint: Older than you think, and aligned to nothing but itself.

Governance & the Board GV

26 CARDS

Regents, Commissioner, board powers, BOCES, §310, Open Meetings, FOIL, ethics and the Code of Ethics.

GV-1

How many members sit on the New York State Board of Regents, how are they chosen, and are they paid?

Hint: Thirteen plus four.

GV-2

Who appoints the Commissioner of Education, and what else does the Commissioner head?

Hint: Not the Governor, and not the Legislature.

GV-3

What is Title 8 of the NYCRR, and what two different bodies of rules does it hold?

Hint: Part 200, Part 154 and section 100.2 all live here.

GV-4

On what grounds may the Commissioner remove a school officer, and does that include a superintendent?

Hint: Two words: wilful, and neglect.

GV-5

What is the legal nature of a board of education, and what authority does an individual board member have acting alone?

Hint: The board is a body, not a set of people.

GV-6

At a board meeting, what is the superintendent entitled to do, and what is the superintendent not entitled to do?

Hint: Voice, but no ballot.

GV-7

What training must a newly elected or appointed school board member complete, and by when?

Hint: Six of something, in the first year.

GV-8

A board member telephones you about a constituent's complaint that a bus route was changed and asks you to fix it. What is the pattern the exam rewards?

Hint: Two wrong answers exist here, and they are opposites of each other.

GV-9

Name the five statutory types of New York school district, and say what is different about the Big 5.

Hint: Four kinds outside the cities, then the cities.

GV-10

What kind of entity is a BOCES, and what does it have no power to do?

Hint: It can bill you, but it cannot tax anyone.

GV-11

What two roles does a district superintendent hold at the same time?

Hint: One local hat, one state hat.

GV-12

What two conditions must a BOCES service meet to generate BOCES aid, and how is that aid paid?

Hint: Cooperative, and approved.

GV-13

What is a section 310 appeal, who may bring one, and what does it cost?

Hint: No filing fee, no courtroom, no attorney needed.

GV-14

What is the filing deadline for a section 310 appeal, and how can a Commissioner's decision be challenged?

Hint: One month, then a very narrow door.

GV-15

When does the Open Meetings Law apply, and do work sessions and retreats count?

Hint: The trigger is a number of people plus a subject, not the label on the agenda.

GV-16

Procedurally, how does a board lawfully enter executive session?

Hint: You have to start in public and name the subject area.

GV-17

Name four of the eight permissible subjects for executive session.

Hint: Litigation and negotiations are two of them.

GV-18

Why is 'personnel' not a lawful basis for going into executive session?

Hint: The statute has an adjective in it that a heading cannot satisfy.

GV-19

A board is about to discuss a named student's discipline. Which authority keeps that out of public session?

Hint: It is a records statute, not a meetings statute.

GV-20

Under FOIL, what are the district's response clocks after a records request arrives?

Hint: Five, twenty, thirty, ten.

GV-21

Who bears the burden under FOIL, and must a requester explain why they want the record?

Hint: The presumption runs against the district.

GV-22

Under General Municipal Law §801, when does a school officer have a prohibited interest in a district contract?

Hint: It is a test about the office, not about the profit.

GV-23

Whose financial interests does the law treat as a school officer's own interests?

Hint: Household, firm, corporation.

GV-24

What must a school officer with an interest in a district contract do, and what happens to a prohibited contract?

Hint: Writing, on the record - and the contract does not survive.

GV-25

What does General Municipal Law §805-a prohibit, and what does §806 require of every district?

Hint: One dollar figure, and one district-wide document.

GV-26

What is the New York State Code of Ethics for Educators, when was it adopted, and what is it not?

Hint: Adopted early in this century; it inspires rather than punishes.

Finance & the Budget FN 30 CARDS

The budget calendar, the tax levy limit and the 60% override, contingency, Foundation Aid, reserves and federal fiscal rules.

FN-1

When is the annual school district budget vote held, and what is the one lawful exception to that date?

Hint: A Tuesday in May, and not the first or last one.

FN-2

How far before the budget vote must the budget hearing be held?

Hint: A window, not a single date - one week to two weeks.

FN-3

What must the budget notice mailed to voters contain, and when does it go out?

Hint: It is mailed after one event and before another, and it has to disclose the supermajority question.

FN-4

What is the Property Tax Report Card, and what is its deadline?

Hint: Just over three weeks out.

FN-5

By what date must a district file its calculated tax levy limit, and with whom?

Hint: Before the budget is even adopted - early in the calendar year.

FN-6

If a proposed budget is defeated, how many times may the board resubmit it and when?

Hint: One more bite, one month later.

FN-7

What must a board do if a budget is defeated twice, or if it chooses not to resubmit?

Hint: There is no third vote.

FN-8

Under current law, how much may a contingency budget raise the tax levy over the prior year?

Hint: The answer is a number, and it is the smallest possible one.

FN-9

Besides the levy freeze, what two limits does a contingency budget carry?

Hint: One cap on a component, one test on every expense.

FN-10

Name three things that are generally not contingent expenses.

Hint: One of them is about letting outside groups use the building.

FN-11

What statute created New York's property tax levy limit, when did it take effect, and what exactly does it limit?

Hint: A 2011 law that first bit a year later.

FN-12

What is the allowable levy growth factor in the tax cap formula?

Hint: Two numbers, and you take the smaller.

FN-13

Why is the tax levy limit not simply 'last year's levy plus two percent'?

Hint: Three moving parts before you even reach the exclusions.

FN-14

Name the statutory exclusions that may be levied above the tax levy limit without a supermajority.

Hint: Capital, pensions, and one kind of court judgment.

FN-15

What vote is required to adopt a budget that pierces the tax levy limit?

Hint: Not a simple majority, and not two-thirds.

FN-16

What are the three components a district must present in the three-part budget on the ballot?

Hint: One of the three is the one voters attack.

FN-17

How is a school tax rate computed, and how do you convert assessed value to full value?

Hint: One is a division; the other undoes a fraction.

FN-18

Why is a budget increase not the same thing as a tax increase, and why does that matter in a budget presentation?

Hint: Two different denominators.

FN-19

What are the three broad revenue sources for a New York school district?

Hint: Local, state, and everything else.

FN-20

What is Foundation Aid, what litigation preceded it, and how is it structured?

Hint: An adequacy formula named for a lawsuit.

FN-21

What is an expense-driven aid, and name four of them.

Hint: They pay you back on last year's approved spending.

FN-22

Distinguish equality, equity and adequacy in school finance, and say which one Foundation Aid rests on.

Hint: Three words, and the last one is the one the formula is built on.

FN-23

What is the statutory cap on unrestricted general fund balance, and what happens to the excess?

Hint: A small percentage of next year's budget.

FN-24

What is different about establishing and spending a capital reserve compared with other district reserves?

Hint: This one goes on the ballot twice.

FN-25

Name four district reserve funds other than the capital reserve and say what each is for.

Hint: Two of them are named for kinds of insurance.

FN-26

Why is appropriating fund balance to hold down the levy a warning sign rather than a solution?

Hint: The problem is not the size of the transfer; it is what it is paying for.

FN-27

Put the capital project sequence in order, from need to financing.

Hint: Survey, vote, state approval, bid, borrow.

FN-28

What does Building Aid reimburse, and what portion of a capital project is always 100% local?

Hint: Approved scope is aided; the rest is yours.

FN-29

Under Title I comparability, what must a district demonstrate, and what is excluded from the comparison?

Hint: The exclusion is what makes uneven per-pupil spending survive the test.

FN-30

How does the supplement-not-supplant requirement work under ESSA, and how did it change?

Hint: You defend your allocation method, not each line item.

Internal Controls & Audit IC 20 CARDS

Claims auditor, internal auditor, audit committee, segregation of duties, OSC - and what Roslyn taught.

IC-1

Who appoints the claims auditor, who does the claims auditor report to, and why does that matter?

Hint: Appointed by the same body it reports to.

IC-2

What does the claims auditor examine before a claim is paid?

Hint: Three adjectives make up the finding.

IC-3

Who may not serve as claims auditor?

Hint: Anyone who is already inside the transaction.

IC-4

What may the district treasurer pay against, and why is that restriction structural rather than clerical?

Hint: A single document authorizes the payment.

IC-5

What does an internal auditor do, and to whom does the internal auditor report?

Hint: Not the same job as the outside CPA, and not the same job as the claims auditor.

IC-6

What is a district audit committee, what is its authority, and what does it actually accomplish?

Hint: Advisory, not executive - and the value is the channel it creates.

IC-7

How often must a district select its external auditor competitively, and what does the board owe after the audit?

Hint: Five years for the selection, ninety days for the response.

IC-8

What is the stated purpose of segregation of duties - and what is the answer people usually leave out?

Hint: Two kinds of problem, not one.

IC-9

State the segregation-of-duties rule for cash in one sentence.

Hint: Four verbs, and one person may not own all of them.

IC-10

Why can the requestor never be the approver, and what does a district add above a stated dollar threshold?

Hint: Two roles that must never collapse into one.

IC-11

Who should reconcile the district's bank statements?

Hint: Anyone but the person touching the money.

IC-12

Name three information-system controls a district needs over its financial system.

Hint: Access, vendors, and the physical means of signing a check.

IC-13

What must every payroll change be traceable to, and what is never sufficient?

Hint: Paper, tied back to a board vote.

IC-14

A small district cannot separate every duty. What compensating controls does it use instead?

Hint: Four substitutes, and one of them is time off.

IC-15

What happened at Roslyn, how much was involved, and when was it uncovered?

Hint: Long Island, mid-2000s, eight figures.

IC-16

Name four of the specific internal control failures that made the Roslyn embezzlement possible.

Hint: Start with who could sign, and who could see.

IC-17

What was the legislative response to Roslyn, and what is it called?

Hint: A 2005 statute with 'accountability' in the name.

IC-18

Name the five elements of the post-Roslyn accountability response.

Hint: Training, internal audit, committee, RFP, stronger external audit.

IC-19

Where does the Office of the State Comptroller sit in New York government, and what does it do to school districts?

Hint: Elected on its own, and it answers to no agency.

IC-20

What is the Fiscal Stress Monitoring System, what does it measure, and what are its classifications?

Hint: Three levels of trouble plus a clean result.

Personnel & Labor PS 29 CARDS

Tenure areas, the four-year probation, §3020-a, APPR and NYS-STEPS, Taylor Law, Triborough and certification.

PS-1

How long is the probationary period for a New York teacher or building principal, and what changed?

Hint: It got longer, and the change has a July date attached.

PS-2

Besides completing probation, what evaluation condition must be met before tenure may be granted?

Hint: Three good years out of four, and the last one cannot be the bad one.

PS-3

What is Jarema credit and why does miscomputing it cost districts tenure cases?

Hint: It shortens the clock, based on service you already had.

PS-4

What is tenure by estoppel?

Hint: Nobody granted it; the calendar granted it.

PS-5

Tenure is granted in what, and where are the categories defined?

Hint: Not a position. A category, defined in regulation.

PS-6

What is the 40% rule in tenure area assignment?

Hint: A percentage of a person's schedule triggers an appointment obligation.

PS-7

When a position is abolished, who is excessed, and on what basis is that determined?

Hint: The comparison pool is narrower than the district.

PS-8

What rights does an excessed employee have afterward, and for how long?

Hint: A list, and a period measured in years.

PS-9

What protections does a probationary teacher keep, despite having no tenure?

Hint: Probation limits the statutory protection, not the constitutional one.

PS-10

What is section 3020-a and what must charges under it look like?

Hint: Written, during the school year, with a look-back limit.

PS-11

Who finds probable cause on 3020-a charges, and within what period?

Hint: A board vote, and a very short number of days.

PS-12

How long does an employee have to request a 3020-a hearing, and what happens if they do not?

Hint: Ten of something - and silence is not neutral.

PS-13

How is a 3020-a hearing officer selected, and what happens if the parties cannot agree?

Hint: Fifteen days of negotiation, then the state steps in.

PS-14

What penalties may a 3020-a hearing officer impose?

Hint: Four penalties on a scale, and a remedial category alongside them.

PS-15

How is a 3020-a decision reviewed, and on what standard?

Hint: It is reviewed as an arbitration award, not as an agency decision.

PS-16

What does Education Law §3020-b provide, and how does it differ from §3020-a?

Hint: Same statute family, faster track, tied to ratings.

PS-17

What statute is the Taylor Law, what year is it from, and what are its three core commands?

Hint: Article 14 of a statute that is not the Education Law.

PS-18

What is the Triborough Amendment and why does it dominate New York school bargaining?

Hint: It is about what happens after a contract expires.

PS-19

What are the penalties for a public employee strike in New York?

Hint: A multiple of pay, and the union loses something too.

PS-20

Distinguish mandatory from non-mandatory subjects of bargaining, and give an example of each.

Hint: One category is about the job; the other is about the program.

PS-21

Walk through the Taylor Law impasse sequence for a school district.

Hint: Three stages, and the last one belongs to the board.

PS-22

What part of collective bargaining may be discussed in executive session, and what must be public?

Hint: Strategy is private; the vote is not.

PS-23

What is the superintendent's role in negotiations, and what are the two failures the exam models?

Hint: Who sets the limits, who runs the table, and who must not freelance.

PS-24

Under Education Law §3012-d, who is evaluated, what are the two categories, and what are the rating levels?

Hint: Two subscores, four levels, one matrix.

PS-25

What restriction applies to grades 3-8 ELA and mathematics state assessment results in APPR?

Hint: The verb in the statute is 'shall not be required'.

PS-26

What is NYS-STEPS, what created it, and by when must every district adopt a plan?

Hint: The successor system, from a 2024 chapter law.

PS-27

What clearance must a prospective district employee have before employment, and who runs it?

Hint: It happens before the first day, not after.

PS-28

Under the incidental teaching rule, how far outside a certificate may a superintendent assign a certified teacher, and under what condition?

Hint: A weekly hour limit plus a recruitment test you must be able to prove.

PS-29

What did the Regents do on January 13, 2025 that affects the SDL certificate, and does the SDL exam survive it?

Hint: The certificate is being retired; the exam is not.

Students, Rights & Compliance CP 30 CARDS

IDEA and Part 200 at district scale, §504, Part 154, DASA, McKinney-Vento, FERPA and §2-d, Title IX, ESSA.

CP-1

What is child find at district level, and what does the district have to produce?

Hint: It has 'find' in the name, and it reaches children who are not in your schools.

CP-2

Who must be on a Committee on Special Education, and who appoints it?

Hint: Six roles, and one of them is the parent.

CP-3

Within how long must a district act on a special education referral, and what are its two options?

Hint: Two weeks of school days, and two possible moves.

CP-4

Once a parent consents, how long does the district have to complete the initial individual evaluation?

Hint: The word 'school' is deliberately missing from this one.

CP-5

For a student not previously identified, how long does the board have to arrange special education programs and services after receiving consent?

Hint: Same number as the evaluation clock, different unit.

CP-6

How often must an IEP be reviewed and a student be reevaluated?

Hint: One year for the plan, three years for the testing.

CP-7

State the least restrictive environment standard, and name the failure mode it produces at district level.

Hint: The standard is about the maximum extent of something.

CP-8

What happens when a district is identified with significant disproportionality?

Hint: A mandatory set-aside, plus a policy review.

CP-9

How many tiers of administrative review does New York have for a special education due process decision?

Hint: One more than most states.

CP-10

What is pendency, and what must a party show to invoke it?

Hint: It requires no showing at all.

CP-11

When does removal of a student with a disability become a disciplinary change of placement, and what must happen then?

Hint: Ten days in two different senses.

CP-12

What two questions does a manifestation determination review ask, and what follows a 'yes' to either?

Hint: One prong is about the disability; the other is about the district.

CP-13

Under what circumstances may a student with a disability be removed regardless of the manifestation determination, and for how long?

Hint: Three special circumstances, one number, and the unit is school days.

CP-14

What are the three prongs of disability under Section 504, and who does 504 cover that IDEA does not?

Hint: Have it, had it, or be regarded as having it.

CP-15

Name the three Section 504 obligations that belong to the district as a recipient, not to individual schools.

Hint: A person, a notice and a procedure.

CP-16

How quickly must a district identify a possible multilingual learner after enrollment, and what three instruments does the process use?

Hint: Same clock as a special education referral, and three tools.

CP-17

Name the five English language proficiency levels used in New York, and the annual assessment that measures them.

Hint: Five participles, in order of increasing proficiency.

CP-18

What triggers a mandatory bilingual education program in New York, and why is that a district-level rather than a building-level decision?

Hint: A headcount in one building, at one grade level.

CP-19

What characteristics does the Dignity for All Students Act protect, and which one do candidates usually forget?

Hint: One of the categories is physical and is unusual among anti-discrimination statutes.

CP-20

State the DASA reporting clock for an employee who witnesses or receives a report of harassment.

Hint: One day to speak, two more to write.

CP-21

How does McKinney-Vento define a student in temporary housing, and what school may that student attend?

Hint: The definition turns on three adjectives about the residence.

CP-22

Under FERPA, when do a parent's rights transfer to the student, and how long does the district have to allow inspection of records?

Hint: Two triggers for transfer, and a 45-something for inspection.

CP-23

What does Education Law §2-d require of every educational agency, beyond what FERPA requires?

Hint: A bill of rights, an officer, a framework and a contract rider.

CP-24

State the two breach-notification clocks under Education Law §2-d.

Hint: One week for the vendor, two months for you.

CP-25

Which Title IX regulation is currently enforced, and what happened to the 2024 Rule?

Hint: The newer rule did not survive.

CP-26

Distinguish CSI, TSI and ATSI under ESSA.

Hint: Whole school, a subgroup, and a subgroup that is as low as a CSI school.

CP-27

What plans does an identified school and its district produce in New York, and which ones does the state approve and monitor?

Hint: Two acronyms, and only one tier goes to Albany.

CP-28

Who may attend the public schools of a New York district tuition free, and what is the test?

Hint: Two age boundaries and one word for the qualifying condition.

CP-29

What is the mandated reporter standard in New York, and what must a reporter not do first?

Hint: A standard of suspicion, and a thing you must skip.

CP-30

How does the child abuse in an educational setting process differ from a report to the Statewide Central Register?

Hint: Who the alleged abuser is decides which system you are in.

Case Law CA 24 CARDS

Name to holding and holding to name - stated as the law is now, not as older prep notes state it.

CA-1

Tinker v. Des Moines (1969) - state the holding.

Hint: The standard has two adverbs in it.

CA-2

Bethel School District v. Fraser (1986) - state the holding.

Hint: A nomination speech full of innuendo.

CA-3

Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier (1988) - state the holding and say when it governs instead of Tinker.

Hint: The test is about pedagogy, and the trigger is sponsorship.

CA-4

Morse v. Frederick (2007) - state the holding.

Hint: A banner across the street from the school during a parade.

CA-5

Mahanoy Area School District v. B.L. (2021) - state the holding and what it settles for districts.

Hint: Off campus, on a weekend, on social media.

CA-6

Goss v. Lopez (1975) - state the holding and how New York codifies it.

Hint: Minimum process for a short suspension.

CA-7

New Jersey v. T.L.O. (1985) - state the standard for a school search.

Hint: Two halves: how it starts, and how far it goes.

CA-8

Vernonia School District 47J v. Acton (1995) - state the holding, precisely.

Hint: One category of student, and the narrowest one.

CA-9

Board of Education v. Earls (2002) - what did it do to Vernonia, and what does it not authorize?

Hint: It widened the category from Vernonia - but not all the way.

CA-10

Safford Unified School District v. Redding (2009) - state the holding and the operating rule districts take from it.

Hint: The intrusion outran the suspicion.

CA-11

Board of Education v. Rowley (1982) - state the holding, and say who won.

Hint: Benefit, not maximization - and the school district prevailed.

CA-12

Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District (2017) - state the current FAPE standard.

Hint: Progress appropriate in light of something.

CA-13

Honig v. Doe (1988) - state the holding, and then state the framework that governs today.

Hint: The case is about stay-put; the modern answer has three moving parts.

CA-14

Luna Perez v. Sturgis Public Schools (2023) - state the holding and the district-level implication.

Hint: It is about exhaustion, and it opened a second door.

CA-15

School Board of Nassau County v. Arline (1987) - state the holding.

Hint: Tuberculosis, and a teacher.

CA-16

Pickering v. Board of Education (1968) - state the holding and the test it left behind.

Hint: A letter to the editor about school finance.

CA-17

Mt. Healthy City School District v. Doyle (1977) - state the holding and correct the common misstatement.

Hint: Burden-shifting, and the district did not simply win.

CA-18

Garcetti v. Ceballos (2006) - state the holding as it applies to school employees.

Hint: It turns on whether the speech was part of the job.

CA-19

Gebser v. Lago Vista Independent School District (1998) - state the liability standard for teacher-on-student harassment.

Hint: Two elements: who knew, and how they responded.

CA-20

Davis v. Monroe County Board of Education (1999) - state the standard for peer harassment and how it differs from Gebser.

Hint: Student-on-student, with three adjectives and a control element.

CA-21

Kennedy v. Bremerton School District (2022) - what did it do to the Lemon test?

Hint: A football coach at midfield, and a test that is no longer the framework.

CA-22

Santa Fe Independent School District v. Doe (2000) - state the holding, and say what it settled.

Hint: Friday night, the loudspeaker, and a student election about who speaks.

CA-23

Lau v. Nichols (1974) - state the holding and what it obliges a district to do.

Hint: Identical is not equal.

CA-24

Plyler v. Doe (1982) - state the holding and the enrollment practice it dictates.

Hint: It is about who may be enrolled at all.

Written Assignments WA 20 CARDS

Three criteria, four score points, four task types, the required move counts, and how responses lose points.

WA-1

State the three SDL written-assignment scoring criteria, in the official wording.

Hint: Three, not four - and none of them is 'Completeness'.

WA-2

How many score points are on the SDL written-assignment scale, and what does each one mean?

Hint: Four words: thorough, general, partial, little or no.

WA-3

Besides the four score points, what two other outcomes can a written response receive?

Hint: One is for writing the wrong thing; one is for writing nothing.

WA-4

What does a 4 do on PURPOSE that a 3 does not?

Hint: One adverb separates them, and it is about coverage.

WA-5

What does a 4 do on SUPPORT that a 3 does not?

Hint: Quality of the example, and soundness of the reasoning.

WA-6

Which written assignment is worth more on each part, and how much time should you give each?

Hint: One task is worth twice the other.

WA-7

What are the three required moves in the sample Work Product assignment, and what form does the response take?

Hint: Why now, two issues, and your own role.

WA-8

What are the three required moves in the sample Case Study assignment, and how long is the response?

Hint: Did well, did poorly, then a specific number of actions.

WA-9

What are the three required moves in the sample Management Problem Solving assignment?

Hint: Two of one thing, one of another, plus a justification.

WA-10

What are the required moves in the sample Educational Program Analysis assignment?

Hint: One strength, two weaknesses - and count the strategies that follow.

WA-11

What does 'multi-document' mean on Part Two's Assignment Two, and what does it require of you procedurally?

Hint: The prompt is not all on one screen.

WA-12

State the prospective-action rule for SDL written responses.

Hint: Two words become one word.

WA-13

What is the most common PURPOSE failure on the Case Study, and why does it happen?

Hint: It is the same failure as writing the second bullet again.

WA-14

What is the 'wrong count' failure mode, and what is the fix?

Hint: The prompt gives you the numbers; the template does not.

WA-15

What is a naked assertion, and what sentence pattern replaces it?

Hint: The missing word is 'because', and it has to do real work.

WA-16

Both long tasks open their charge with the same two words. What are they, and what do they oblige?

Hint: The instruction is in the first line of the charge.

WA-17

What does it mean to answer a district-level prompt at school level, and how do you catch yourself doing it?

Hint: The test is named School District Leader for a reason.

WA-18

Name three actions that would put a written response outside the superintendent's authority.

Hint: Firing, bargaining, and adopting.

WA-19

How do you decide what form and audience a written response should take?

Hint: The answer is in the imperative verb of the charge.

WA-20

What are you not scored on in the SDL written section, and what conditions still apply to your writing?

Hint: Not scored on it, but still required to be readable.

Answer Patterns PA 22 CARDS

The reasoning moves the selected-response items reward, drilled as recall prompts.

PA-1

An item asks what a district's educational vision is for. What is the rewarded understanding, and what three things is a vision not?

Hint: Steering, not selling and not scheduling.

PA-2

The board has voted against your recommendation. What is the rewarded next move?

Hint: The debate is over the moment the vote happens.

PA-3

How should a superintendent treat the board of education in any item involving information flow?

Hint: One body, one channel, one set of facts.

PA-4

A stem describes a change you intend to make. When do you engage the people affected?

Hint: The order of two verbs: engage and argue.

PA-5

The stem tells you the superintendent has already listened - focus groups held, surveys returned. What comes next?

Hint: Do not repeat a step the stem has already completed.

PA-6

An item offers you a chance to cost, staff or fund a proposed initiative. What has to happen first?

Hint: Diagnosis comes before the price tag.

PA-7

Four reasonable-sounding fixes are offered for a problem the stem has described in detail. What is the first question you ask of each?

Hint: Cause, not quality.

PA-8

A stem hands you a number - a rate, a score, a percentage change. What is the rewarded move before you act on it?

Hint: Interrogate the measure before you interrogate the people.

PA-9

A single employee has made a serious error. At district level, what does the exam reward?

Hint: The person is the symptom.

PA-10

Some schools in the district do something well and some do not. What is the finding?

Hint: The variation is the problem, not the weak building.

PA-11

In what order does a superintendent set a districtwide expectation and require building plans?

Hint: Standard, then plans - not the reverse.

PA-12

A situation has become frustrating and reassigning or reorganizing people would relieve it. What is the rule?

Hint: Two prohibitions: the motive, and the trial balloon.

PA-13

Staff are not doing something the district needs them to do. When is a new requirement the wrong answer?

Hint: Ask whether they cannot or will not.

PA-14

How is a culture of accountability built, according to the pattern the SDL items reward?

Hint: Support is the mechanism; the deadline is the distractor.

PA-15

Current performance falls well short of a district goal. What do you do to the goal?

Hint: One of the two things in play is not negotiable.

PA-16

A district has collected achievement or survey data. What is the rewarded thing to do with it?

Hint: Ownership of the response belongs to the people in the data.

PA-17

Two professional development options are offered. What separates the keyed one?

Hint: Does anyone's classroom or building change as a result?

PA-18

Principals report they are overloaded. What is the part you control?

Hint: Look at what central office is sending them.

PA-19

A community or staff group is entrenched and negative. What answer does the exam reward?

Hint: Direction and duration both matter.

PA-20

An item is about communicating with a specific audience - families, the community, staff. What are the two rules?

Hint: One rule about the words, one about the routes.

PA-21

What do the qualifiers 'first', 'most important' and 'best/most effective' each rank?

Hint: Sequence, consequence, fit.

PA-22

An item says 'required to', 'legally justified in', or otherwise asks what the law provides. How do the answer patterns apply?

Hint: Turn the patterns off and read the rule.

PART VIII

Day-Of Game Plan

A minute-by-minute plan for a single part and for the both-parts-in-one-day appointment, with the arithmetic shown — what ninety seconds an item leaves you for the writing, where the checkpoints fall, and what to do when Assignment Two is running out of clock.

BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE

Sit Part One and Part Two on different days if the window and your schedule allow it. The both-parts appointment is **8 hours 40 minutes** including a 40-minute lunch, and it is not a knowledge problem — it is a stamina problem, and stamina is the one thing you cannot cram in the last week. The catch is that SDL windows are only about eleven days long, so two separate seats are not always available. If you do sit both in one day, the 40 minutes in the middle is not a break; it is a reset, and there is a protocol for it below.

What the day is made of

Both parts have exactly the same shape. Nothing about 103 and 104 differs structurally — only the content and the names of the two written assignments.

4 hrs

Testing time per part — 240 minutes

60

Selected-response items — 50% of the score

2

Written assignments — the other 50%

+15

Minutes for tutorial and NDA, *outside* the four hours

Part	Assignment One — short, 17%	Assignment Two — long, 33%
103 Part One	Work Product 150–300 words · Subarea I, vision and communication	Case Study 300–600 words · Subarea II, change and accountability
104 Part Two	Management Problem Solving 150–300 words · Subarea II, resources and compliance	Educational Program Analysis 300–600 words · Subarea I, the district educational programme — and the one with the Document tabs

On **both** parts, Assignment One is the short 17% task and Assignment Two is the long 33% task. On 104 that means the long task comes from Subarea I and the short one from Subarea II — the reverse of 103. Do not walk in expecting the subareas to appear in order.

THE TWO INTERFACE FACTS THAT CHANGE YOUR PLAN

One: you may complete the assignments **in either order**, and you may **return to either** as time permits — the test imposes no section order and no per-section clock. Every minute of the four hours is yours to allocate, which means the allocation is your responsibility and nobody will warn you. **Two:** on the **Educational Program Analysis** (104, Assignment Two), the assignment does not fit on one screen. To see all of it you must click buttons at the top of the screen labelled “**Document 1**,” “**Document 2**,” and so on. Candidates have written whole responses off Document 1 because they never noticed the

tabs. **Click every tab before you write a word.** Some assignments also need the scroll bar to show the full charge — scroll to the bottom of every prompt.

The week before

Logistics

- Confirm the date, reporting time and centre address on your appointment confirmation — and confirm the date falls **inside an SDL window**, which is not the same calendar as the SBL windows
- Check the ID rules on NYSTCE's test policies page — your name must match your registration **exactly**
- Plan the route, the parking and the walk from the car; add 30 minutes of slack
- Run the free computer-based testing tutorial at home so the 15 minutes on the day is a formality, not a first encounter
- If you need alternative testing arrangements and have not requested them, it is already late — do it now

Preparation

- Write **one full timed Assignment Two** — 300–600 words in 72 minutes — for each part you are sitting. Timed. On a keyboard. Not in your head
- Write **one full timed Assignment One** — 150–300 words in 33 minutes
- Do a 60-item selected-response block against a clock and find out what your real pace is
- Re-read the three scoring criteria until **PURPOSE · APPLICATION OF CONTENT · SUPPORT** is automatic, and re-read the distractor taxonomy
- **Stop adding new content four days out.** After that, only rehearse what you already have

The night before

Do

- Lay out ID, confirmation details, keys, glasses and **layers** — test centres run cold and you cannot fix it once seated
- Pack lunch and water now if you are sitting both parts, so the 40 minutes is not spent hunting for food
- One light pass of the Cheatsheet — the four subareas, the sixteen objectives, the 50/50 split
- One light pass of the four skeletons in the Task Playbook
- Set two alarms
- **Sleep.** At this point sleep is worth more than another hour of items, and on an eight-hour appointment it is worth considerably more

Do not

- ✗ **Do not learn anything new.** New content the night before displaces retrieval of old content and buys you nothing on a 60-item sample.
- ✗ **Do not take a full practice part.** You will arrive already fatigued for the one that counts.
- ✗ **Do not re-plan your pacing.** Pick the clock below, or the alternative, and commit. Deciding at 0:00 on the day costs you ten real minutes.

- ✗ **Do not caffeine-load beyond your normal amount.** Four hours is a long time to be jittery and a longer time to crash.

What to bring, and what will be taken off you

SDL is delivered at Pearson VUE test centres — NYSTCE calls them Pearson Professional Centers. Security is airport-adjacent and non-negotiable.

Bring

- **Current, valid, government-issued photo ID bearing your signature**, with the name exactly as registered. This is the one item that cannot be worked around at the desk.
- Your appointment details — date, time, test codes, centre address.
- **Layers.** Sweater or jacket you can put on and take off.
- If you are sitting both parts: **lunch and water**, packed. Protein and slow carbohydrate, not a heavy meal.
- Arrive **30 minutes early**. Check-in involves ID verification, a digital signature, a photograph and a locker; arriving late can cost you the seat *and* the fee.

Leave in the locker — or at home

- ✗ **No reference materials of any kind.** This is stated in the official written-assignment directions: “You may not use any reference materials during the test.” Nothing you have not memorized is available to you.
- ✗ **No calculator.** The numbers in the exhibits are there to be read, compared and reasoned about — a budget line that is up 18% while enrolment is flat is an argument, not an arithmetic problem. If you find yourself wanting to compute to the dollar, you have misread the charge.
- ✗ **No phone, watch, bag, notes, books or food at the desk.** Everything goes in a locker. Smart watches and fitness trackers count as phones.
- ✗ Note materials are **issued by the centre**, not brought by you. Use whatever they hand you for outlining; your response must be typed in the on-screen answer box.
- ✗ Confirm the current list on NYSTCE’s test policies page before you travel — policies change and the centre enforces the current one.

The 15 minutes before the clock starts

The computer-based testing tutorial and the nondisclosure agreement take **15 minutes and are not part of your four hours**. That is 15 free minutes. Most candidates waste them.

–0:15	The nondisclosure agreement. Read it, accept it. It is the promise not to reproduce or disclose test content — which is also why no honest site can show you a live form.
–0:12	The tutorial. Find, deliberately: the review / flag control, how to move between items, the scroll bar inside a prompt, the Document tab buttons, and the word-count display on the answer box. Locating these now costs nothing; locating them at 1:40 costs minutes you were going to spend writing.
–0:04	Write your fixed numbers down on the notepad the centre gave you, before the clock starts: 0:05 · 1:35 · 2:52 · 3:25 · 3:47 . Those are your five checkpoints from the plan below. Under them, leave two blank lines labelled A1 and A2 — that is where the required counts from each charge go.

–0:01 **Decide nothing else.** Order chosen, checkpoints written, hands off. Begin.

A word-count display in the answer box is a standard feature of this Pearson constructed-response interface; the SDL written-assignment directions themselves do not describe it, so confirm where it is during the tutorial rather than assuming its position.

The arithmetic behind the plan

Before the clock, the maths. Every pacing recommendation on this page is derived from these numbers, and if you disagree with the numbers you should change the plan.

Quantity	Figure	What it implies
Testing time per part	240 minutes	Four hours. The 15 minutes of tutorial and NDA are separate and do not extend this.
60 items at 90 seconds each	90 minutes	$60 \times 90 \text{ s} = 5,400 \text{ s} = \text{exactly } 90 \text{ minutes}$. That is 37.5% of your testing time buying 50% of your score.
What is left	150 minutes	$240 - 90$. Everything else — reading the charges, both assignments, the flagged-item sweep and the final audit — comes out of this.
Of that, on the writing itself	105 minutes	72 on Assignment Two (33%) and 33 on Assignment One (17%) — a 2.2 : 1 split against a 2 : 1 difference in weight, deliberately tilted toward the long task because it has documents to read.
Minutes per score-percent	1.8 vs 2.1	$90 \text{ min} \div 50\% = 1.8 \text{ minutes per percentage point on multiple choice}$. $105 \text{ min} \div 50\% = 2.1 \text{ on the writing}$. Near parity, tilted slightly toward the half where an extra minute actually changes a rating.
Drafting rate you need	about 12 words/min	A 500-word Assignment Two inside a 42-minute drafting block is 11.9 words a minute of finished prose. That is slow typing and hard thinking — which is the correct ratio. If you have never written at that rate against a clock, that is the rehearsal to do this week.
If you run 75 s per item instead	75 minutes	Frees 15 minutes. Put them in the Assignment Two drafting block, not in the sweep.
If you run 2 minutes per item	120 minutes	This is the failure mode. Half your testing time on half your score leaves 120 minutes for two assignments, a sweep and an audit — and the 33% task gets squeezed first. If you are at item 30 and the clock says 1:05, you are running two minutes an item. Speed up immediately.

One part · the four-hour clock

Multiple choice first. It is the work that degrades least under fatigue and the work you can safely defer part of — so it goes early, and its leftovers absorb whatever the writing actually costs.

0:00–0:05 **Read both charges. Write nothing else.** Open Assignment One and Assignment Two, scroll each to the bottom, and on 104 click **every Document tab** so you know how many there are. On your notepad write, for each: the task type, the word range, and **the required counts** — how many issues, how many actions, how many strengths, how many justifications the charge demands. Those numbers are what you audit against at 3:47.

0:05–1:35

	move on without looking back. Do not revisit flags yet.
1:35–1:40	Reset. Eyes off the screen. Re-read the charge of Assignment Two and the counts you wrote at 0:05. You are about to spend 72 minutes on a third of the test; enter it deliberately rather than by drifting into it.
1:40–2:52	Assignment Two — the long, 33% task. Case Study on 103, Educational Program Analysis on 104. Inside the 72 minutes: 12 minutes reading the case or all the documents and marking evidence, 8 minutes outlining one line per charge bullet, 42 minutes drafting, 10 minutes revising against the three criteria. Target 450–550 words — comfortably inside 300–600, and long enough to support every claim.
2:52–3:25	Assignment One — the short, 17% task. Work Product on 103, Management Problem Solving on 104. Inside the 33 minutes: 5 minutes planning, 20 minutes drafting, 8 minutes revising. Stop at 300–340 words. This task has a narrow charge and a rehearsable shape; giving it an hour is the commonest way to end up thin on the task worth twice as much.
3:25–3:47	The flagged items. Work the flags in order. Anything still unresolved after 60 seconds: pick the best remaining option and clear the flag. Confirm that no item anywhere is unanswered — there is no penalty for a wrong answer, so a blank is a guaranteed zero you chose.
3:47–4:00	The charge audit. Open each assignment and point, physically, at the paragraph that answers each bullet of its charge. Count your issues, actions, strengths and justifications against the numbers on your notepad. Confirm every action is stated as something you <i>will do</i> , not something that <i>should have been done</i> . Confirm your name appears nowhere in either answer box.

*Practitioner-recommended, not official. The four hours of testing time and the separate 15 minutes for tutorial and nondisclosure agreement are official; **the internal allocation is ours** — the test allocates no time to any section. This clock matches the one in the Task Playbook to within a few minutes; the difference is that the Playbook budgets 80 seconds per item and this page budgets 90, which moves eight minutes from the sweep into the writing.*

THREE HARD CHECKPOINTS — THESE ARE THE WHOLE PLAN

1:35 — you are out of the multiple-choice section, finished or not. Items you flagged are waiting for you at 3:25. Items you never reached are not.

2:52 — Assignment Two has a complete draft. Every bullet answered, every count hit, even if the prose is rough. Polish scores nothing; a missing third action costs a rating point.

3:25 — both answer boxes contain complete drafts. Nothing else happens — not a flagged item, not a rewrite — until this is true.

THE ALTERNATIVE ORDER

Write first, if your writing degrades badly when tired

Charges **0:00–0:06** · Assignment Two **0:06–1:21** (75 min) · Assignment One **1:21–1:54** (33) · reset **1:54–2:00** · all 60 items **2:00–3:40** at **100 seconds each** ($60 \times 100 \text{ s} = 100 \text{ min}$) · audit and unanswered-item sweep **3:40–4:00**. It totals 240 exactly. The cost is that you meet the items tired and with less slack — the benefit is that the 33% task gets your best hour. Pick one version this week and rehearse it; do not choose on the day.

THE TRADE YOU MAKE WHEN YOU FALL BEHIND

Cut from the sweep, never from a charge

A rushed guess on a flagged item costs you a fraction of one item out of sixty — roughly **0.8%** of the test. A charge bullet left unanswered costs you on **PURPOSE** across a whole assignment worth **17% or 33%**. That ratio is not close. When time is short, the flagged items pay for the writing.

Both parts in one appointment

8 hours 40 minutes, including a 40-minute lunch. Here is what that figure actually contains, and how to spend the middle 40 minutes.

CHECK THE ARITHMETIC OF THE PUBLISHED FIGURE
240 + 40 + 240 = 520 minutes = 8 hours 40 minutes exactly. The published total is the two testing sessions plus the lunch, and nothing else. It does not appear to contain the **15 minutes** of tutorial and nondisclosure agreement, and it certainly does not contain check-in, ID verification, the locker, the photograph, or the re-verification after lunch. **Plan a nine-and-a-half-hour day on site**, and arrange your travel, parking and childcare around that, not around 8:40. This is our arithmetic on the published number, not an NYSTCE statement about the schedule — confirm your reporting and release times on your own appointment confirmation.

-0:30	Arrive. Check-in, ID, signature, photograph, locker. Do not read anything while you queue.
0:00	Tutorial and NDA , 15 minutes, outside the testing clock. Run the checklist from the section above.
0:15	Part One begins. Four hours on the clock above. Treat it as the whole day; do not pace yourself “for two parts.” Holding energy back costs you real points now to protect a session you have not reached.
4:15	Part One ends. Lunch — 40 minutes. The protocol is below. Note that signing out and back in is part of the 40, not additional to it.
4:55	Part Two begins. Four more hours. Consider the write-first order here even if you used items-first in the morning — see the note below.
8:55	Done. Sign out, retrieve the locker, and go home. Do not reconstruct answers in the car park.

Elapsed times from the start of the tutorial, assuming one tutorial block. Wall-clock times depend on your reporting time.

THE 40 MINUTES, MINUTE BY MINUTE
0–5 sign out, locker, restroom — this is real time, spend it fast. **5–20** eat: protein and slow carbohydrate, moderate portion. A heavy meal buys you a 2 p.m. crash inside the 33% task. **20–30** outside, daylight, walk. No phone. **30–35** water, layers, restroom again. **35–40** back at the desk and re-verified. You get roughly **25 usable minutes** out of the 40 — budget accordingly.

THE ONE RULE ABOUT LUNCH
Do not review anything and do not relitigate Part One. It is submitted. Nothing you remember about it can be changed, and every minute spent on it imports anxiety into a part that is worth exactly as much. If a colleague texts asking how it went, do not answer until the day is over. Do not look at the Cheatsheet, do not look at this page, do not look at your phone.

AFTERNOON ADJUSTMENT
Part Two’s long task, the **Educational Program Analysis**, is the heaviest reading on the assessment — multiple documents behind tabs — and it lands when you are five hours in. If you are going to switch to the write-first order for one part, switch for this one: charges, then Assignment Two while you can still hold five documents in your head, then Assignment One, then the sixty items at 100 seconds each.

When you are stuck on an item

You have 90 seconds. Here is what to do with them.

0–15 s	Read the last line of the stem again. Most SDL items ask something narrower than the scenario implies — <i>first</i> step, <i>most</i> appropriate, <i>best</i> demonstrates. The qualifier is usually what is separating the options, not the content.
15–45 s	Eliminate on behaviour, not on plausibility. Cut the option that acts before gathering information; the one that solves it personally instead of building capacity; the one that addresses a person when the stem describes a system; the one that is lawful but unilateral where the stem hands you a stakeholder. See the distractor taxonomy.
45–75 s	If two remain, ask which one a superintendent could defend to a board. Not which is nicer — which survives the question “why did you do that?” Then answer.
75–90 s	Answer anyway and flag it. Never leave the item blank on the way past. A guess costs nothing and a blank cannot score. Then move — the marginal minute is worth far more inside a 33% assignment than on your fourth pass at one item.

THE TRAP THAT EATS THE MOST TIME

An item where you can construct a story in which each of two options is right. That is a sign you are adding facts the stem did not give you. **Strip your reasoning back to what is written.** If the stem does not say the principal has been consulted, she has not been. If it does not say the data are disaggregated, they are not. The key is nearly always the option that needs the fewest assumptions.

When Assignment Two is running out of time

This is the emergency worth rehearsing, because it is the one that costs a whole part. Triage by how much time is left.

Time left	State you are in	What to do
25 minutes	Draft covers about half the charge	Stop expanding and start covering. Write one short paragraph for each remaining charge bullet — claim, then one sentence of support. Do not go back and improve anything you have already written. Breadth across the charge is PURPOSE ; depth on one bullet is not.
15 minutes	Two or three bullets untouched	Skeleton every remaining bullet in one or two sentences each. A thin response that addresses every part of the charge outscores a polished response that addresses half of it — the criteria are applied to the whole response, and an unaddressed bullet is a hole in PURPOSE that nothing else repairs.
8 minutes	One bullet left, response is short	Answer the last bullet. Then stop. Do not chase the word count. 300–600 words is guidance about what a full answer usually takes, not a threshold you are scored against — you are scored on purpose, application of content and support. A complete 340-word response beats an incomplete 600-word one.
4 minutes	Assignment One is still empty	Abandon Assignment Two immediately and write something in Assignment One. Even three sentences that engage the charge. An empty box is scored blank , which is not a low score — it is nothing at all, on a task worth 17% or 33%. This is the only situation in which you should walk away from unfinished work on the bigger task.

WHY THE COUNTS ON YOUR NOTEPAD EXIST

Almost every way a strong candidate loses points on the SDL written section is a counting failure: the charge asked for *three* actions and the response gave two; it asked you to *justify* each action and the response justified the first; it asked for

a strength *and* a weakness and got one of each for only two of the three documents. You wrote those numbers down at 0:05 precisely so that at 3:47 you can check them without re-reading the whole prompt.

The last ten minutes

Work this list in order. It recovers more points per minute than anything else available to you at that point in the test.

The writing

- Every bullet of every charge has a paragraph you can point at — **both** assignments
- Counts match the numbers on your notepad: issues, actions, strengths, weaknesses, justifications
- Every action is something you **will do**, in the future, stated as a step — not a critique of what someone should have done
- Every claim has support behind it: an example from the documents, or explicit reasoning
- You cited the case or the documents specifically — on 104, by document number
- Your name appears **nowhere** in either answer box
- Both answer boxes actually contain text. Look at both. Confirm it with your eyes, not your memory

The items

- Every one of the 60 items has an answer selected — use the review screen, not your recollection
- All flags cleared, or at least answered under flag
- No item changed in the last two minutes on a hunch — late changes on judgment items are usually worse than the first read
- Then **stop**. Sitting with the remaining seconds and second-guessing a scenario item is how good responses get damaged

After the test

Getting the result

- ✓ Scores post online **beginning at 10:00 p.m. on the score report date** for the window you tested in — roughly two and a half weeks after the window closes.
- ✓ The date is fixed by the **window**, not by the day you sat. Testing on day one of a window gets you the same score date as testing on day eleven.
- ✓ You get a **scaled score and a pass/fail decision for each part separately; 220** passes. There is no combined SDL score. NYSTCE's free explainers — How to Read Your Score Report and Understanding Candidate Score Reports — explain each block of the report, including how performance is reported by subarea and for the written section.
- ✓ Scores are transmitted to NYSED automatically and attach to your certification file.

If you did not pass

- ✗ **Check the waiver score before you book anything.** NYSED will consider waiving a score within **0.5 SEM** of passing: **212** on 103, **211** on 104 — with an overall GPA of 3.5 or higher on a **conferred** bachelor's or master's degree and an active application in TEACH. See Start Here for the conditions and the NYSED page.

- ✗ Otherwise: **30-day wait** before retaking the same test, and you must **reregister and pay the full fee again**. You retake only the failed part.
- ✗ **The window calendar, not the 30-day rule, is what actually sets your date.** SDL windows are two to five months apart. Look at the calendar before you plan a study schedule — there is no benefit to being ready six weeks before a window opens.
- ✗ Use the subarea information on the report to aim the retake, but remember it is **50% written**. If the written section is where you lost the part, more content study will not fix it — timed rehearsal against the three criteria will.

THE LAST THING TO REMEMBER

Most written responses land at a 2 or a 3, and the difference is almost never eloquence. It is **answering every part of the charge, hitting the counts it asks for, applying district-level knowledge accurately, and supporting each claim with an example from the material or with reasoning you actually spell out**. When you are unsure what a scenario wants: gather the information before you act, work through the building leaders rather than around them, build capacity instead of solving it yourself, address the system rather than the individual, and tie it back to student learning across the district.

PART IX

Sources & Links

The official NYSTCE 103/104 materials, the NYSED certification and policy pages, the New York law and finance references worth bookmarking, and the out-of-state Pearson guides that are the largest free supply of scored constructed-response exemplars — with an honest currency warning on each.

START WITH THIS

Everything the test maker publishes about School District Leader is **free**. The test design and assessment framework, the complete preparation guide, sample selected-response items with annotated answer keys tagged to objectives, all four written assignments with directions, official strong responses and the evaluations explaining why they scored — every one of those is a public PDF on the NYSTCE site at no cost. There is no paid NYSTCE study guide for this field and no official practice test. Work the free official set first: on 103/104 it is the only material that is definitionally correct about the exam.

\$0

cost of the entire official SDL preparation set

102 pp.

framework + prep guide + both sample-question PDFs

0

official full-length SDL practice tests

2008

copyright year of the framework the exam is still built on

Official NYSTCE · Fields 103 & 104 **PRIMARY – USE THESE FIRST** the whole official set

- **Preparation materials page, School District Leader** <https://www.nystce.nesinc.com/TestView.aspx?f=HTML_FRAG/NY103_PrepMaterials.html>The one page that links every official SDL document. If you bookmark a single URL, bookmark this one. Note what is *not* on it: there is no practice-test link and no paid study guide — see the practice-test note below.
- **Test Design and Assessment Framework, 103/104 (PDF, 15 pp., © 2008 NYSED)** <https://www.nystce.nesinc.com/content/docs/NYELA_TestDesign_Frameworks_103-104.pdf>The blueprint, and the only document that defines what is scored. It gives the test design for both parts — **60 selected-response items and 2 written assignments per part**, selected-response worth 50% and written worth 50% — and then the full text of all sixteen objectives (0001–0008 on each part) with the bulleted examples underneath each one. Those bullets are the item writers' source list — read them as a checklist, not as prose. If a study resource disagrees with this PDF about item counts, weightings or objective content, the study resource is wrong. **Currency note:** the © 2008 date is not a defect — SDL was never rewritten the way School Building Leader was (107/108 → 109/110), so this is the live blueprint. It is a defect only when a file borrows the framework's era of law and policy along with its objectives.
- **Preparation Guide – complete (PDF, 47 pp.)** <https://www.nystce.nesinc.com/content/docs/NYELA_PG_SDL_complete.pdf>The whole guide in one file: the “Preparing for the Test” front matter plus both parts' sample questions and written assignments. Download this if you want everything offline in one document. The front matter is short and worth the ten minutes: it is where the test maker states how the selected-response and written sections combine, and how written responses are read.
- **Part One (103) – Sample Questions and Written Assignments (PDF, 18 pp.)** <https://www.nystce.nesinc.com/content/docs/NYELA_PG_SDL_PartOne_samplequestions.pdf>The highest-value eighteen pages in SDL preparation. Contains: sample selected-response items; an **annotated answer key that tags every item to its objective** and explains the key; the on-screen directions for the written section; the **Work Product** assignment (the short task, 150–300 words) and the **Case Study** assignment (the long task, 300–600 words) with their full stimulus material; an official strong response to each; and an evaluation of each response written against the scoring criteria. Read the evaluations line by line — they are the closest thing to the scorers explaining themselves, and the most skipped document in the set.
- **Part Two (104) – Sample Questions and Written Assignments (PDF, 22 pp.)** <https://www.nystce.nesinc.com/content/docs/NYELA_PG_SDL_PartTwo_samplequestions.pdf>Same architecture for Part Two, and four pages longer. The two assignments here are **Management Problem Solving** (the short task) and **Educational Program Analysis** (the long task). Watch the ordering: on 104 the *short* assignment comes out of Subarea II (resources and compliance) and the *long* one out of Subarea I (the district educational program), which is the reverse of the pattern candidates expect after working Part One.
- **Scoring criteria – inside both sample-question PDFs**Not a separate download, and easy to miss. SDL written responses are scored on three criteria — **PURPOSE** (fulfill the charge of the assignment), **APPLICATION OF CONTENT** (accurately and effectively apply the relevant knowledge and skills) and **SUPPORT** (support the response with appropriate examples and/or sound reasoning) — on a four-point scale: 4 thorough command, 3 general command, 2 partial command, 1 little or no command, plus unscorable and blank. If a study file describes SDL scoring in any other vocabulary, it has borrowed School Building Leader's rubric, which is a different instrument entirely.
- **School District Leader test page** <https://www.nystce.nesinc.com/TestView.aspx?f=HTML_FRAG/NY103_TestPage.html>Fees, passing score and the window link, in the program's own words. Current as fetched August 2026: **Part One \$169 · Part Two \$168 · Both Parts \$337**, passing score **220** on each part scored separately, and availability stated as “By appointment during testing windows.” Fees move; confirm before you register.
- **Testing windows and score report dates** <https://www.nystce.nesinc.com/Content/HTML_FRAG/NYCBTRB_ScoreReportingDates_SLAs.html>The table the SDL test page links to as “View testing windows.” Score reports post “beginning at **10:00 p.m.** on the score report date indicated.” **Two cautions.** SDL windows are *not* School Building Leader windows — score report dates are identical across the two but the windows differ (SDL's are shorter and open later), so substituting SBL dates will cost you a sitting. And the table carries no heading naming which tests it governs; the only thing tying it to SDL is the 103 test page's direct link to it. Unambiguous, but check it against the test page before planning around it.
- **Retake policy** <https://www.nystce.nesinc.com/TestView.aspx?f=NYCBT_RetakePolicy.html&t=NY103> • **Withdrawal and refund** <<https://www.nystce.nesinc.com/TestView.aspx?f=NYCBT-WithdrawalRefundPolicy.html&t=NY103>> • **Changing your registration** <https://www.nystce.nesinc.com/TestView.aspx?f=NYCBT_ChangingYourRegistration.html&t=NY103>SDL is not on the 60-day retake list, so the **30-day** wait applies and you reregister for every retake. Registration is **valid one year** from issue and expires with no refund if unused and not withdrawn. Rescheduling is free up to **24 hours** before the appointment; cancelling loses your seat. The 30-

day rule rarely binds in practice, because the gap between SDL windows is longer anyway. Nothing official addresses retaking inside a single window — assume you cannot until the program tells you otherwise.

- **Test policies** <https://www.nystce.nesinc.com/TestView.aspx?f=NYCBT_TestPolicies.html&t=NY103>Identification requirements, what you may bring, what happens to your session if you break a rule, and the nondisclosure agreement you sign on screen. Read it once, well before test day.
- **Alternative testing arrangements** <https://www.nystce.nesinc.com/TestView.aspx?f=NYCBT_AA-RequestingAlternativeTestingArrangements.html&t=NY103>The request process for candidates with documented disabilities or health-related needs, and for nursing mothers. Requests are made before you schedule and documentation takes time — start it in the window *before* the one you intend to sit.
- **Computer-based testing tutorials** <https://www.nystce.nesinc.com/PageView.aspx?f=HTML_FRAG/GENRB_CBTutorials.html>The interface you will actually use: flagging and review, the behaviour of the writing box, the on-screen timer. Fifteen minutes of your appointment covers the tutorial and the nondisclosure agreement — do it at home and spend that time settling instead. The prep materials page also links a **Pearson Professional Centers tour** showing check-in and the testing room.
- **How to Read Your Score Report (PDF)** <https://www.nystce.nesinc.com/content/docs/NYSTCE_ISR_back.pdf> • **Understanding Candidate Score Reports (PDF)** <https://www.nystce.nesinc.com/content/docs/NYSTCE_Orig_Understanding_Candidate_Score_Reports.pdf>What the scaled score and the reported performance information mean. Read them *before* you sit, not after a disappointing result — on a test offered in a handful of windows a year, a retake decision made in the dark costs months.
- **Master test list** <https://www.nystce.nesinc.com/PageView.aspx?f=GEN_Tests.html>Worth one look for what it does *not* say. As of August 2026 SDL appears as “School District Leader: 103/104” with **no** “through [date]” qualifier and **no** replacement code, while several other fields carry National Evaluation Series successor codes; SDL is also not among the four NYSTCE Flex <https://www.nystce.nesinc.com/PageView.aspx?f=HTML_FRAG/GENRB_Announcement_Flex.html> fields. Translation: 103/104 is not being replaced, and material written for it is not about to be obsoleted by a format change.
- **Study guides index** <https://www.nystce.nesinc.com/PageView.aspx?f=HTML_FRAG/GENRB_PrepStudyGuide.html>SDL appears on this index, but its link resolves back to the preparation materials page above — **the free Preparation Guide PDF is the study guide**. There is no separate NYSTCE-sold SDL study guide to hunt for.

THERE IS NO OFFICIAL SDL PRACTICE TEST – AND HERE IS EXACTLY HOW STRONG THAT CLAIM IS

The School District Leader preparation materials page carries no practice-test link, and the phrase “Practice Test” does not appear on it at all. NYSTCE does sell online practice tests for other fields — the practice test page <https://www.nystce.nesinc.com/Content/HTML_FRAG/GENRB_NYSTCEPractice_LearnMore.html> states that fees “start at \$11.00” with “120-day access to activated test” — but that page does not enumerate which fields are covered, so it cannot independently confirm SDL’s exclusion. **Be clear about the evidence:** this rests on the SDL prep page’s *silence*, not on an affirmative statement that no SDL practice test exists. It is strongly supported and it is what the site shows today; if you find a live SDL practice-test listing, trust the listing over this page and send it in. Either way, your full-length rehearsal has to be self-built out of the official sample items and the out-of-state guides below — and anyone selling you a “real” SDL practice test is not reselling something official.

NYSED policy and certification **WHAT THE EXAM IS FOR** certification, waivers, standards

- Certification exam score waiver** <<https://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/certexamwaiver.html>>
LAST UPDATED JUNE 18, 2026 The single most consequential page here for anyone who lands just under the cut. Two conditions, both required: your score falls within **0.5 standard error of measurement** of the passing score on a required NYSTCE test, and your overall GPA is **3.5 or higher** on a **conferred** bachelor's or master's degree — an incomplete program does not count. For School District Leader the waiver thresholds are **212 on Part One (103)** and **211 on Part Two (104)** against the 220 passing score. Every attempt can be checked against the threshold if you have sat a part more than once. You need an active certification application on file in TEACH before requesting the waiver, and transcripts older than five years should be re-sent. Educating All Students is not waiver-eligible. The program's announcement <https://www.nystce.nesinc.com/PageView.aspx?f=HTML_FRAG/GENRB_Announcement_ExamWaiver.html> of the process is dated 2/26/25.
- Administrator certificate** <<https://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/admincert.html>> • **New Administrator Certificate overview** <<https://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/NewAdminCert.html>> On **January 13, 2025** the Board of Regents approved amendments establishing a new **Administrator certificate** and a **Superintendent Extension**. The dates that matter, in NYSED's words: institutions could begin registering the new programs January 29, 2025; the Department "will no longer register programs leading to the current School Building Leader and School District Leader certification on or after **February 1, 2025**"; all registered SBL and SDL programs "will be discontinued on or after **September 1, 2030**"; and individuals "must apply and meet all requirements for the Initial SBL and/or **Professional SDL** certificates by **January 1, 2031**." The Regents item <<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/sites/regents/files/HE%20-%20Proposed%20Amendments%20Related%20to%20Establishing%20the%20Professional%20Administrator%20Certificate.pdf>> behind the action is also public.
- Administrator Certificate Q&A (PDF)** <<https://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/pdf/Administrator%20Certificate%20Q%20A.pdf>> Read this one for a fact that reframes the whole phase-out: applicants for the Administrator certificate must "achieve a passing score on **both parts of the SBL AND SDL exams**," or use the Individual Evaluation Pathway. **The SDL certificate is being phased out; the SDL exam is not.** 103/104 becomes a requirement for the new certificate, which is consistent with SDL's absence from the NES transition list. It also confirms that an existing SBL holder reaches the Administrator certificate by passing the SDL exam, and reaches the Superintendent Extension through the Administrator certificate rather than directly from an SBL. **An honest gap:** the Q&A answers the "do I have to convert?" question only for SBL, and NYSED's no-conversion-required sentence names "SBL, SAS, or SDA" — it does not name SDL. The strong implication is that a valid SDL remains valid, but no NYSED sentence says so in those words. Do not repeat that as settled; ask the Office of Teaching Initiatives.
- Administrator Certificate Decision Tree (PDF)** <<https://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/pdf/AdministratorCertificateDecisionTree3.pdf>> A one-page flowchart for working out which certificate applies to you and by which route — the fastest way to answer "do I still need the SDL, or should I apply under the new structure?" before spending \$337 on both parts.
- School district leadership — experience requirements** <<https://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/certificate/exp/leadership-school-district.html>> **LAST UPDATED OCTOBER 19, 2020** The experience side of SDL certification: "three years of full-time, classroom teaching, pupil personnel service, or educational leadership experience," with acceptable district-level titles listed (District Superintendent, Superintendent, and non-civil-service Deputy, Associate and Assistant Superintendent). It also spells out what makes a position administrative in nature: hiring and retention, pedagogical supervision and evaluation, budget preparation and implementation, curriculum development, and non-membership in the teachers' bargaining unit. Note the page's own update date — **October 19, 2020**, well before the 2025 Regents action. Accurate on experience, stale on the certificate landscape; verify degree and coursework requirements through TEACH and the Search Certification Requirements tool <<https://www.highered.nysed.gov/tcert/>>.
- Teaching and educational leadership standards (hub)** <<https://www.nysed.gov/teacher-leader-development/teaching-and-educational-leadership-standards>> • **PSEL — NYS Version (PDF)** <https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/teacher-leader-development/psels.nys-version_1.24.24.pdf> The Board of Regents adopted the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders in **2017**; NYSED notes the NYS version "includes small but significant changes from the National PSEL standards focusing on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion," and from 2025–2026 principal practice rubrics in evaluation plans must align to it. **Read the alignment claim carefully:** the SDL framework contains *no* statement of alignment to any external standards set — not PSEL, not ISLLC. The scored blueprint is the 2008 objectives themselves. Learn the PSEL vocabulary because it is the language of current New

York practice and rubrics; do not study it as the test specification, and be sceptical of anything advertising “PSEL-aligned SDL preparation.” No official crosswalk between the 2008 framework and PSEL was found on NYSED or NYSTCE.

- **PSEL national version, 2015 (PDF)** <https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/professional-standards-for-educational-leaders_2015.pdf> • **ISLLC 2008 (PDF)** <<https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/educational-leadership-policy-standards-isllc-2008.pdf>> • **Indicators of Excellent Leadership (fillable PDF)** <<https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/indicators-of-excellent-leadership-fillable.pdf>> All three are hosted by NYSED. The ISLLC 2008 file is here for one reason: it is the standards set that circulating SDL material most often presents as current. It is not — it is the predecessor. Keep it to recognise the vocabulary, not to memorise it. The Indicators tool is a PSEL self-assessment and doubles as a vocabulary list for written responses.
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New York law, finance and operations **104 SUBAREA II LIVES HERE** bookmark, don't memorise

- Education Law (EDN) – full text, NY Senate** <<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/EDN>>The statute itself, free, current and linkable section by section — the reference to reach for whenever a study file makes a legal claim you want to check. Sections a district leader uses constantly: §1709 <<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/EDN/1709>> (powers and duties of boards of education), §1950 <<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/EDN/1950>> (BOCES), §2023-a <<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/EDN/2023-A>> (the tax levy limit), §3020-a <<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/EDN/3020-A>> (disciplinary procedures for tenured staff), §2510 <<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/EDN/2510>> (abolition of positions and preferred eligible lists), §310 <<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/EDN/310>> (appeals to the Commissioner) and §2-d <<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/EDN/2-D>> (student data privacy). The Senate site hosts the consolidated laws; where a figure or deadline is decision-critical, confirm with counsel and the current session laws.
- Commissioner's Regulations – 8 NYCRR**The regulations, not the statute, are where most of the operational detail an SDL item tests actually lives: Part 100 (curriculum and instruction, graduation requirements), Part 200 (students with disabilities), Part 155 (facilities), Part 80 (certification). **A caution about links:** NYSED publishes some Parts as HTML pages and hosts others only in the compiled New York Codes, Rules and Regulations, and the URLs move — so use the anchors that are stable rather than a deep path that may already be dead. Individual Part 200 sections are published in readable HTML, for example §200.4 <<https://www.nysed.gov/special-education/section-2004-procedures-referral-evaluation-iep-development-placement-and-review>> (referral, evaluation, IEP and placement), §201.4 <<https://www.nysed.gov/special-education/section-2014-manifestation-determinations>> (manifestation determinations) and §201.7 <<https://www.nysed.gov/special-education/section-2017-general-procedures-suspensions-and-removals-students-disabilities>> (suspensions and removals). For anything proposed or newly adopted, the Board of Regents site <<https://www.regents.nysed.gov/>> carries the meeting items, which show amendments months before secondary sources catch up.
- Office of the State Comptroller – local government publications** <<https://www.osc.ny.gov/local-government/publications>>The best free plain-English library on New York district operations and finance, written by the office that audits districts. Two that pay for themselves: the claims auditing process <<https://www.osc.ny.gov/local-government/publications/claims-auditing-process/introduction>> and auditing roles, responsibilities and resources <<https://www.osc.ny.gov/local-government/publications/cost-saving-ideas-school-district-auditing-roles-responsibilities-and-resources>> — between them they settle who does what across the claims auditor, the internal auditor, the external auditor and the audit committee, which is the exact distinction 104 Objective 0006 items turn on. The wider library covers reserve funds, fund balance, capital planning, procurement and multiyear financial planning.
- Office of the State Comptroller – local government hub, including fiscal stress monitoring** <<https://www.osc.ny.gov/local-government>>OSC's **Fiscal Stress Monitoring System** scores districts on financial and environmental indicators and publishes the designations annually. Two uses: it is the vocabulary of district fiscal health — fund balance ratios, operating deficits, cash position, short-term borrowing — which is exactly the language a strong Management Problem Solving response uses; and you can pull a real district's report and read what an outside monitor says about it, which beats any invented scenario. The monitoring pages sit under this hub — navigate from here rather than a bookmarked deep link, because OSC restructures its paths.
- NYSED State Aid Office** <<https://stateaid.nysed.gov/>> · **State Aid to Schools: A Primer (PDF)** <<https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/fiscal-analysis-research/primer-2025.pdf>> · **Education Finance** <<https://www.nysed.gov/program-offices/education-finance>>Where district revenue comes from and how the formulas behave. The Primer is the best plain-English explanation of New York school funding in print, free and updated annually: the aid categories, how Foundation Aid works, the expense-driven aids, the budget calendar. If your finance preparation is one document, make it this one. Anything predating the 2011 tax levy limit is describing a system that no longer operates.
- Dignity for All Students Act** <<https://www.nysed.gov/student-support-services/dignity-all-students-act>> (**information guide, PDF** <<https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/student-support-services/dasa-information-guide.pdf>>)**Signed 2010, effective July 1, 2012, amended effective July 1, 2013.** At district level the testable content is structural: the Dignity Act Coordinator in every school, the reporting chain from staff to principal to superintendent, material incident reporting to NYSED, and the policy and training obligations the board must adopt. You are expected to know what the district owes the state here, not merely that bullying is bad.
- McKinney-Vento in New York** <<https://www.nysed.gov/essa/mckinney-vento-homeless-education>> · **NYS-TEACHS** <<https://www.nysteachs.org/>>Students in temporary housing: immediate enrollment, enrollment while documents are gathered, school-of-

origin choice, transportation, comparable services, and a designated local liaison. NYS-TEACHS runs the state helpline under contract to NYSED and its district-facing guidance is more practical than the statute.

- **Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework** <<https://www.nysed.gov/crs/framework>> (PDF <<https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/crs/culturally-responsive-sustaining-education-framework.pdf>>)
NYSED's four principles, in the Department's own words: **Welcoming and Affirming Environment · High Expectations and Rigorous Instruction · Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment · Ongoing Professional Learning**. It carries distinct guidance for district leaders, which is the part most candidates skip. Nothing published in 2008 could name it, so it is not in the SDL framework — but it is the current New York language for the equity dimension of 104 Objectives 0001–0003, and using it accurately reads as current practice.
- **Education Law §2-d — student data privacy** <<https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/EDN/2-D>>The New York statute that goes well beyond FERPA: the Parents' Bill of Rights for Data Privacy and Security, obligations that flow down to every third-party contractor touching student data, the district Data Protection Officer, and breach notification duties. Vendor contracts, one-to-one device programs and the annual software inventory all run through it. NYSED's privacy guidance pages have moved more than once — reach the statute above and search nysed.gov for current guidance rather than trusting an old bookmark.
- **ESSA accountability in New York** <<https://www.nysed.gov/accountability/essa-accountability-system>> • **Title I, Part A fact sheet** <<https://www.nysed.gov/essa/title-i-part-improving-basic-programs-operated-leas-fact-sheet>>Accountability designations, the indicators that produce them, and what a district owes a school identified for support. This is what 104 Objective 0008 — supervising compliance with federal, state and local mandates — actually turns on. Note the era problem in inherited files: anything written before December 2015 is describing No Child Left Behind, and anything treating Adequate Yearly Progress as operative is describing a system replaced a decade ago.

Free out-of-state analogues worth working

You will exhaust the four official SDL PDFs quickly, and then official practice is gone. The largest free supply of professionally written superintendent items with published rationales — and of scored constructed-response exemplars — is the other state programs run by the same publisher, Evaluation Systems, a Pearson business, which also builds the NYSTCE. Same item architecture, same four-point scoring vocabulary, same house style in the distractors. What does not transfer is state law: read them for reasoning and structure, never for statute.

Guide	Currency	What it is best for
Illinois · Field 225 Superintendent	CURRENT · © 2017	The best of them. Sample selected-response items across objectives 0001–0011, each with the correct response and a full official rationale, plus constructed-response assignments and the complete four-point scoring-scale descriptions.
New Hampshire · NES 809 and 811 Superintendent Subtests I and II	CURRENT	Printable sample questions, written-assignment directions and the written-assignment scoring scale — the easiest set to run as timed practice on paper.
Oklahoma · CEOE Field 248 Superintendent	CURRENT	The closest public analogue to the SDL case study, and the only one that publishes both a strong and a weak sample response with rationales for each.
Ohio · OAE Field 015 Educational Leadership	CURRENT	Four distinct constructed-response assignment types, each with directions and a sample strong response. The richest free source of scored writing exemplars anywhere.
Texas · TExES 195 Superintendent	CURRENT	A rationale for every option , not just the key, and “select TWO” items that force you to read stems properly.
Arizona AEPA Field 80 · Oklahoma CEOE 048 · Illinois ICTS 187	RETIRED CODES	Real Evaluation Systems material, so the item style is in the family — but © 2005, © 2007 and © 2006 respectively. Format familiarity only. See the warning below.

Copyright years and test-code successions as recorded on the guides themselves.

The five current guides, and how to work each one **FREE · OFFICIAL IN THEIR OWN STATES** 5 programs

- Illinois · Field 225: Superintendent — Illinois Licensure Testing System, [il.nesinc.com](https://www.il.nesinc.com/)** <<https://www.il.nesinc.com/>> **Work this one first.** The © 2017 official study guide carries sample multiple-choice items across objectives 0001–0011, each with the correct response and a full rationale written in the same register as NYSTCE's own, plus constructed-response assignments and the complete four-point scoring-scale descriptions. The objective map lines up with SDL unusually well: shared vision and continuous improvement against 103-0002; leading change and data-driven planning against 103-0005 and 103-0007; the instructional-program and staff-development objectives against 104-0001 through 104-0005; the organisational, fiscal and legal objectives against 104-0006 through 104-0008. Its Illinois statutory references — what the local board has sole authority to do, for instance — are Illinois law and must not be carried into a New York response. Reach it from the ILTS home page and open the Field 225 preparation materials from the test list; the guide is what this page vouches for, not any particular deep URL for it.
- New Hampshire · NES Superintendent Subtest I (809)** <<https://www.nestest.com/prepare/809>> **and Subtest II (811)** <<https://www.nestest.com/prepare/811>> Structurally the nearest cousin to SDL's two-part design: each subtest is 50 selected-response questions plus **2 open-response assignments**, 15 minutes of tutorial and nondisclosure agreement, 3 hours 30 minutes of testing, no reference materials. Subtest I splits 50/50 between visionary leadership, collaboration and educational contexts (0001–0002) and a culture of achievement and instructional leadership (0003–0004) — 103 territory. Subtest II splits 50/50 between organisational and human resource management (0005–0006) and fiscal and operational management with legal and ethical guidelines (0007–0008) — 104 territory. Treating 809 as Part One practice and 811 as Part Two practice is the obvious move. The pages carry **printable sample questions, an overview and competency printout, the written-assignment directions and the written-assignment scoring scale** — the set to print and work under a timer, away from a screen.
- Oklahoma · CEOE Field 248: Superintendent — selected response** <https://www.ceoe.nesinc.com/Content/StudyGuide/OK_SG_SRI_248.htm> • **constructed response** <https://www.ceoe.nesinc.com/Content/StudyGuide/OK_SG_CRI_248.asp> The closest publicly available analogue to the SDL case-study format. The assignment hands you a scenario plus exhibits on a district's instructional programs, personnel, demographics, operations and climate, and asks you to identify a significant strength; identify a significant concern and its implications for strategic planning; describe in detail a strategy to address the concern; and explain how the strength supports that strategy. Target length roughly **300–600 words** with evidence cited from the exhibits — the same shape and length band as SDL's long assignments. Oklahoma's four scoring dimensions (Purpose, Subject Matter Knowledge, Support, Rationale) are not SDL's three, so score yourself against PURPOSE / APPLICATION OF CONTENT / SUPPORT instead. What makes the page worth an evening is that it publishes **both a strong and a weak sample response with rationales** — reading a weak response you can diagnose is the fastest way to stop writing one.
- Ohio · OAE Field 015: Educational Leadership — selected response** <https://www.oh.nesinc.com/CONTENT/STUDYGUIDE/OH_SG_SRI_015.htm> • **constructed response** <https://www.oh.nesinc.com/CONTENT/STUDYGUIDE/OH_SG_CRI_015.htm> The richest free source of scored writing exemplars, because Ohio publishes **four distinct constructed-response assignment types** rather than one: a **Work Product** assignment (visionary and inclusive leadership), a **Student Differences** assignment (student learning), a **Management Problem Solving** assignment (resource management and educational law), and a **Case Study** written assignment. Two of those are SDL's own task names and a third maps onto Educational Program Analysis. Each is published with directions and a sample strong response, and the page closes with the performance characteristics and the scoring scale; selected-response competencies 0001–0010 run from shared vision through legal dimensions. Method that works: draft all four under timed conditions, then compare your *structure* — not your content — against the published strong responses.
- Texas · TExES Superintendent (195) — sample selected-response items** <https://www.tx.nesinc.com/Content/StudyGuide/TX_SG_SRI_195.htm> Section 4 of the Texas preparation manual, and unusually generous: each item is labelled with the competency it measures and **every answer option gets a rationale**, not just the key. That is the most useful feature in any free guide, because on SDL your losses come from plausible distractors rather than unknown content, and reading why three options fail trains the discrimination that matters. Ten competencies across three domains: leadership of the educational community (ethics, shared vision, family and community, the political/social/economic/legal context, work with the board), instructional leadership (curriculum design, learning culture, staff evaluation and development), and administrative leadership (budget and finance, facilities and operations, organisational decision-making). Texas also mixes in **"select TWO"** items, which drills stem-reading discipline. Sample topics travel well: bond-election stakeholder strategy, what a usable mission statement must contain, assessing district climate, district-wide dropout reduction.

RETIRED CODES – ITEM STYLE ONLY

Three superintendent guides circulate widely in SDL folders and all three are for **retired test codes**. **Arizona AEPA Field 80** (© 2005) is the oldest document you are likely to be handed — AEPA has been replaced by Arizona's current program and Field 80 no longer exists. **Oklahoma CEOE Field 048** (© 2007) was superseded by Field 248, which is listed above and is the one to use. **Illinois ICTS Field 187** (© 2006) was superseded by ILTS Field 225 — also listed above, also better in every respect. All three predate ESSA (2015), PSEL (2015), and the merger that produced today's Pearson Evaluation Systems. They are genuine test-publisher material, so the item architecture is in the family and the stems read the way real stems read — that is the whole of their value. Every legal, funding and accountability reference in them is stale, and a candidate who studies accountability out of a 2005 guide will write about Adequate Yearly Progress on a 2026 exam. Format familiarity only; take no content from them.

Books

Two titles come up in nearly every SDL conversation. Neither is official, neither is required, and both are worth borrowing before buying — check a university library first, and both turn up used.

PRACTITIONER-WRITTEN

Preparing for Educational Leadership <<https://www.amazon.com/Preparing-Educational-Leadership-Kenneth-Forman/dp/1323818278>>, **3rd edition**

Kenneth Forman & Jeffrey Soloff · Pearson Learning Solutions, 2018 · 376 pp. · ISBN 978-1323818275

The more current of the two and the one most often assigned in New York preparation programs. Pearson Learning Solutions is a publishing arm — that is **not** the same as being published by the testing programme, and the book carries no official standing for 103/104. Read it for the leadership content and New York context; check anything format-related against the framework PDF, which is free and definitive.

DATED – 2013

NYSTCE School District Leader (103/104) Test Secrets Study Guide <<https://www.amazon.com/NYSTCE-School-District-Leader-Secrets/dp/1627338764>>

NYSTCE Exam Secrets Test Prep Team · Mometrix Media, 2013 · 168 pp. · ISBN 978-1627338769

Independent, unaffiliated with NYSED or the testing programme, and **published in 2013** — a date that predates several NYSTCE changes, PSEL (2015), New York's 2017 adoption, and the entire 2025 Administrator certificate action. The strategy chapters age better than the content chapters. Verify every logistical, certification and legal claim against the NYSTCE and NYSED pages linked above.

ON BUYING ANYTHING AT ALL

The official set for this exam is four free PDFs, and nothing sold in a bookshop can tell you more about the scored blueprint than the framework does. Spend money only where the free material genuinely runs out — which, for SDL, means extra scored constructed-response practice. The out-of-state guides above supply that for nothing.

How to vet a source

SDL preparation circulates as a folder of files passed hand to hand, most of them undated and unattributed. Four checks, in this order, will sort almost any of it in under two minutes.

- **Check the copyright year — then decide what the year actually threatens.** The check with a twist on SDL: the official framework is © 2008 and the preparation guide © 2010, and both are *current*, because the exam was never rewritten. Age alone does not condemn a file. What age condemns is the **law, finance and accountability** content — before 2011 predates New York's tax levy limit, before 2015 predates ESSA and PSEL, before 2025 predates the Administrator certificate. Ask what kind of claim the file is making before deciding whether its date matters.
- **Check the test code on the cover.** The fastest staleness detector in this field, because programmes retire codes and the successor guide is almost always free. **103/104** is the current New York SDL. A cover reading AEPA **80**, CEOE **048** or ICTS **187** is a retired out-of-state code with a live successor (Illinois **225**, Oklahoma **248**). A New York file citing **107/108** is School Building Leader material from a retired revision — a different exam besides.
- **Check whether the standards it cites still exist.** A file organised around the **ISLLC 2008** “Educational Leadership Policy Standards” is built on a set superseded by PSEL in 2015 and by New York's NYS Version in 2017. That does not make its leadership reasoning worthless, but it dates the file precisely, and the law and accountability content is usually from the same era. Separately: any file claiming the SDL *framework* aligns to a named standards set is overstating — the 2008 framework cites none.
- **Check any legal claim against the current statute before you write it down.** One click to nysenate.gov settles most of them. A wrong section number or a superseded holding costs you more under **APPLICATION OF CONTENT** than a missing citation does — the criterion rewards applying knowledge *accurately*. If you cannot verify a number, name the mechanism and drop the number: “a supermajority of voters is required” is safe; a percentage you half-remember is not.

Specific tells that a circulating SDL file is stale

If you see this	What it tells you, and what is actually current
A retired test code on the cover — AEPA 80, CEOE 048, ICTS 187, or NYSTCE 107/108	At best a decade old. Free successors exist: Illinois 225 (© 2017), Oklahoma 248 , and — for the New York building-level exam, a different assessment from this one — 109/110 . Keep the old file for item style; take no content from it.
ISLLC 2008 presented as the current standards	Superseded. The national PSEL standards came in 2015; the Board of Regents adopted the NYS Version in 2017 , and from 2025–26 principal practice rubrics in New York evaluation plans must align to it. A file still teaching to ISLLC is almost certainly pre-2015 throughout.
“Three-year probationary period” for teachers or administrators	Out of date. New York moved to a four-year probationary period for appointments made on or after July 1, 2015 . Three years was correct before that, which is why the error survives in files copied forward — including practice banks that key the wrong answer.
School finance material with no property tax cap — no tax levy limit, no 60 percent supermajority to override, worked examples from the 2000s, or Alan Hevesi named as the sitting State Comptroller	Pre-2011. The tax levy limit arrived with Chapter 97 of the Laws of 2011 and restructured district budgeting, override votes and contingency budgets — the largest change in New York school finance in a generation and the one most often missing from inherited decks. Hevesi has not been Comptroller since 2006, which dates a deck instantly. Replace it with the NYSED State Aid Primer < https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/fiscal-analysis-research/primer-2025.pdf > and the OSC publications.
“Suspicionless drug testing of students in extracurricular activities is unconstitutional”, or drug testing described as limited to athletes	Superseded by <i>Board of Education v. Earls</i> (2002), which extended <i>Vernonia</i> and upheld suspicionless testing for students in competitive extracurricular activities generally. A file still stating the old rule predates 2002 or was copied from something that did — and if it is wrong about a case this well known, treat the rest of its case notes as unverified.
<i>Honig v. Doe</i> described as a flat bar on removing a student with a disability	Pre-1997 IDEA framing. Stay-put still applies, but IDEA now permits removal to an interim alternative educational setting for up to 45 school days for weapons, drugs or serious bodily injury, following a manifestation determination .
“Common Core” as New York’s standards, or AYP as the accountability mechanism	Both retired. New York’s standards are the Next Generation Learning Standards , and accountability runs under ESSA (2015) rather than NCLB’s Adequate Yearly Progress. Vocabulary this dated in a written response reads as someone who last led a district a decade ago.
School Building Leader scoring vocabulary applied to SDL — “Completeness, Accuracy, Depth of Support and Understanding”	Wrong instrument. SDL is scored on PURPOSE · APPLICATION OF CONTENT · SUPPORT , four-point scale. A file that mixes the two rubrics is a file that assumed the two New York leadership exams are the same exam, and it will have made the same assumption about windows, fees and score scale.
An answer key that contradicts its own explanation	Not a dating problem but a quality problem, and common in hand-built banks. Where the rationale argues one option and the key names another, trust neither and go back to the framework objective. Circulating locally authored banks are known to carry mis-keyed items and rationales citing the wrong case — work them for the reasoning, never for the key alone.

THE ONE-LINE VERSION

Official material tells you what is **scored**. Practitioner material tells you what other people think is scored. Where they disagree, the framework and the sample-question PDFs win — every time, without argument.

A source is missing, or wrong

Links rot, NYSED migrates URLs, fees change and testing windows move. Every link here was fetched and confirmed in **August 2026**, and several NYSED paths are mid-migration, so some will drift. Where an exact path was uncertain

this page links the section landing page rather than guessing at a deep link — a working front door beats a broken shortcut.

If you find a dead link, a better official source, a document this page has missed, or a factual error anywhere on this site, please send it back — it helps the next person sitting 103 and 104, and there are not many of us.

File a correction on GitHub <<https://github.com/steveanonymous/SBL-Exam-Prep/issues>>