

**A Curriculum Audit™**  
**of the**  
**TITLE I AND SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS OF THE SAGINAW PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
**Saginaw, Michigan**

**Conducted Under the Auspices of**  
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**Bloomington, IN 47404-0789**

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**Members of the Saginaw Public Schools Audit Team:**

**Senior Lead Auditor**  
Audrey A. Hains, Ph.D.

**Auditors**  
Larry Hunt, CAS  
Eve Proffitt, Ed.D.  
Sue Shidaker, M.Ed.

## VI. SUMMARY

A Curriculum Audit™ is basically an “exception” report. That is, it does not give a summative, overall view of the suitability of a system. Rather, it holds the system up to scrutiny against the predetermined standards of quality, notes relevant findings about the system, and cites discrepancies from audit standards. Recommendations are then provided accordingly to help the district improve its quality in the areas of noted deficiency.

The auditors subjected the Saginaw Public Schools to a comparison of predetermined standards and indicators of quality and discrepancies in their Title I and Special Education programs were noted. These constitute the *findings* of the audit. The auditors then provided *recommendations* to help the district ameliorate the discrepancies. The recommendations represent the auditors’ “best judgment” about how to address the discrepancies disclosed in the report. It is expected that the superintendent and his staff and the board may demur with the recommendations. However, they form the *starting point* for discussion of how to deal with the documented findings.

Normal audit practice is that the board of education *receives* an audit; they do not *accept* it. After review of the audit report, the board requests a response from its superintendent of schools. When the superintendent’s response is received, then the board is in a position to act upon the two sets of recommendations. In this manner, the superintendent and the board are always accountable for what occurs in the school system after an audit report.

The Saginaw Public Schools system has had to adjust and readjust in the past five years to reductions in size—the number of building and central office staff, decreasing student enrollment, closing of school sites, and reduction in finances to support programs and services offered in the past. During this change process, the leadership in the position of superintendent has also changed, while board members have held quite constant. The community and staff are confident that this recent change in leadership will be a big step in resolving the issues they have been facing.

The challenge that is confronting this leadership is the systematizing of processes and procedures so that projected planning and budgeting based on data can occur on a district-wide level and in the Title I and Special Education programs to promote confidence in the school system within the community and help toward achieving the goal of increasing student enrollment. Past practices of written curriculum and zero-based budgeting may need to be revisited and implemented as processes to execute the recommendations in this audit. While curriculum-related board policies exist in most areas, they do not provide a clear framework for direction and support of the Title I and Special Education program. The writing of administrative procedures has been “left up” to the superintendent to provide this direction, but no administrative procedures were presented to the auditors to specify steps to be taken to implement board direction; vagueness exists. The district leadership is functioning under the guidelines of an adopted one-year strategic plan that clearly designates the expectations of management. Steps are being taken to implement these expectations in central office departments and school sites where programming exists for Title I and Special Education students, but there is a long way to go to get systems in place to actualize these expectations, which should be reflected in higher student academic learning. A functional table of organization with quality written job descriptions will provide meaningful management and clear expectations for responsibilities in the design and delivery of curriculum and articulation and coordination of the Title I and Special Education programs, which is the main focus of education. Systemic approaches in curriculum management, assessment, staff development, and budgeting are critical for the coordination of services and limited resources as well as for the funding and implementation of the Title and Special Education programs. Articulation and coordination must occur within the district Pre-K-12 to provide this consistency for Title I and Special Education programming. The citing of the Special Education program by the state department for practices and procedures being implemented in the program accentuates the need to act quickly before funding is denied. Having more schools cited for not meeting Annual Yearly Progress (AYP) is another challenge that must be met by district leadership in the Title I and Special Education programming. Productivity analyses must occur throughout the district for planning and budgeting purposes and procedures to address the financial shortfalls that the district leadership is facing. “Doing what you always did” will not suffice and will not sustain the district.

Legal and learning challenges lie ahead for the Saginaw Public Schools in the continued implementation of state mandates and federal laws pertaining to Title I and Special Education. Pressures to improve student achievement at all schools for all students, especially as related to subpopulation achievement gaps, will continue. In-depth and focused staff development offerings will need to address differentiation of instruction and co-teaching, which are crucial to the learning and achievement of Title I and Special Education students.

The efficacy of the recommendations contained in this audit rests on a viable, valid, comprehensive, and focused board policy framework with administrative procedures providing specificity for the implementation of those policies. Of all the requisite conditions necessary to put into place the components of an improved curriculum management system and Title I and Special Education programs in the Saginaw Public Schools, this piece is fundamental. Hence, the auditors recommend that district leadership adopt board policies with accompanying administrative procedures and the suggested organizational chart with corresponding quality job descriptions to provide local control. Provide direction through a systemic plan or formalized process that will be adhered to in all departments and all schools. Incorporate reasonable timelines that include providing rationale for all initiatives/changes with financial expectations. Build systemic curriculum management and assessment processes into the practices of central office and school personnel. Follow the recommendations in this audit as you proceed. Use the maxim “go slowly but go thoroughly” as a guide for your progress. Establish broad knowledge and common vocabulary bases for each endeavor for communication purposes and broadened support.

The audit is based on the premise that some aspects of management are centrally held by district leadership and other aspects held at the school site. Those held centrally are the ends, the mission, the standards, goals and priorities, student objectives, and student assessment. Those held at the school site as well as in the Title I and Special Education programs are instruction, strategies, groupings, staffing, processes, resources, and programs, but all of these are accountable to those managed at the district level.

It is sincerely hoped by the Saginaw Public Schools curriculum management audit of Title I and Special Education programs team that this report will provide the stimulus for the board, the administration, teachers, and community to take stock and come together in a workable consensus. The audit team is optimistic that given proper attention to the areas requiring improvements in the Saginaw Public Schools Title I and Special Education programs, as cited by the audit team, the expectation of the board and professional staff for increased student achievement for *all* students will accrue over time, especially for those students served by Title I and Special Education programming. The audit will provide direction on how to begin developing the focus and organization that are necessary for increased student learning and work toward closing the achievement gap among students while challenging those who already demonstrate achievement.