Nebraska Department of Education Continuous Improvement Process External Visitation Report

Cedar Rapids Public Schools

May 7, 2013

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Team Members

Team Members:

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Report of School Improvement Process
Prepared by Mr. Alan Ehlers

Purpose of Visit:

The district was at the end of a school improvement cycle and produced a Report of Results, outlining the impact of school improvement efforts. The purpose of the external visit was to validate current school improvement efforts and to provide direction for future school improvement efforts.

A.   Introductory Comments:

The External Team conducted an external visitation at the Cedar Rapids Public Schools on May 7, 2013.

The school improvement team met with the external team and reviewed school improvement activities, interventions, and student achievement results. The entire day was very productive and the teachers, administrators, and external team had very professional discussions about the school improvement process.

B.   Successes, Strengths, and/or Accomplishments:

- The District commitment to the school improvement process was commendable (e.g. a dedicated portion of staff time to work on school improvement activities, time for school improvement work, professional development activities for goal committees and the staff, data retreat activities).
- The district selected relevant school improvement goals based on student achievement data.
- The district implemented relevant interventions to address the school improvement goals.
- Overall student achievement increased in the vocabulary areas for K-6 students.
- The Report of Results completed for this visitation was very well done. The summary of the school improvement activities and the data were presented in a clear and professional manner.

C.   Recommendations:

As the district moves into the next cycle of the school improvement process, please consider the following suggestions:

- Increase the involvement of the district steering committee to guide and inform the school improvement process.
- Schedule an external team pre-visit in 2014-15 to help guide the process in the future.
- Continue to focus on K-12 staff involvement, both certified and classified staff.
- Continue to use student achievement information to drive the school improvement process.
- Explore ways to revisit the school improvement process to build capacity with the staff (e.g. use the NDE Tool Kit as a resource).
- Once the goal is identified, develop a comprehensive K-12 professional development plan and expectations to focus the district.
- When looking at interventions to address goals, focus on "what students will be doing differently" to meet to the goal.
- Limit your goals to 1 goal (e.g. consider integrating technology into a sub goal).
- Explore ways to provide additional time for school improvement activities (e.g. professional development/professional learning teams, training for new (and current) staff in school improvement process).
- Develop a plan to rotate expertise and staff on the various technology concepts to enhance student learning.
- Develop a consistent K-12 format for the professional learning teams, including follow-up and support.
- Explore ways to measure the level of implementation of the interventions (e.g. frequency of use and fidelity to the intervention design).

Goal Report – Reading Comprehension
Prepared by Gina Pospichal & Tina Thiele-Blecher

Goal: All students will improve in the areas of reading comprehension and vocabulary --our 'measuring goal' is to have at least 80% of our students who are meeting or exceeding proficiency.

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A. Introductory Comments:

*Data was presented in a clear and concise manner.
*School improvement committee was well-prepared for external visitation.
*Staff is knowledgeable about Reading Mastery reading program.

B. Successes, Strengths, and/or Accomplishments:

*Reading scores have increased. More students are reading on or near grade level.
*The Reading Mastery program has increased fluency, rate, and decoding skills.
*The Jump Start program contributes to students' readiness for school.
*Students show pride in school's academic and extracurricular programs.
*Strategizing with educators from area schools has improved accountability.

C. Recommendations:

*Triangulate data between Reading Mastery, DIBELS, and MAPS scores to prove reliability.
*Expand focus on reading comprehension.
*Lack of documentation of utilization of graphic organization.
*Evidence of vocabulary development and the use of reading strategies in all content area curricula.

Goal Report – Technology
Prepared by Audrey Loosvelt

A.   Introductory Comments:

·   Administration and teachers realize the importance of technology in schools and developing 21st century learners

B.   Successes, Strengths, and/or Accomplishments:

·   1:1 computers for students in grades 7-12
·   Implemented Angel into secondary classrooms
·   Smartboards in the classrooms
·   Netbooks for elementary classrooms
·   Including Students in conferences, letting them make decisions on how to integrate technology into their school
·   Students love their computers!

C.   Recommendations:

·   Take your tools and find ways to transform curriculum to include assignments allowing students to be the producers, not consumers
·   Bring technology into elementary classrooms
·   Continue with webinars and other forms of professional development
·   Develop goals and a mission for your laptop initiative, why do you have the computers?
·   Investigate Challenge Based Learning Activities