

2014-2015 Progress Assessment

Sweetwater County School District #1

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Progress Assessment

Improvement Priority 1	2
Goal 1: Improve Student Achievement	11

Progress Assessment

Improvement Priority 1

Statement:

Establish a systemic process, guided by the purpose and direction of the district, that will ensure horizontal and vertical alignment of curriculum, assessment, and instruction. This process should also inform support by resources, professional development, and evaluation systems that will frequently monitor implementation of all processes system-wide.

Description:

It is clear from the superintendent's presentation, stakeholder interviews and observations by the External Review team that the system has worked closely with stakeholders to develop powerful direction and purpose statements and all are working collectively in the process of embedding and bringing to life these guiding statements. Due to the turnover in system leadership and the lack of instructional focus and systems alignment which was identified in the "too much too fast" statements by system personnel, the team agrees with system personnel that the diversity of programs is negatively impacting the effectiveness of these initiatives. Additionally, the "fix it" initiatives in place may be inconsistent with the system's desire to "get back to basics" and inconsistent with the purpose and direction statements.

The team noted the impressive school leaders who have successfully designed instructional programming, support structures and professional learning communities. The system has supported these leaders by providing them the autonomy to make data based decisions. The team also found many exemplary classrooms and practices that are the products of highly skilled classroom professionals and these strong school leaders working collaboratively. These can serve as models for improvement for the numbers of more traditional classrooms that should become aligned with system beliefs and guidance concerning what happens in the learning processes.

Significant autonomy between schools is of definite value. However, the power of system support of the improvement of student performance lies in the identification of what fits the purpose and direction and the resulting guidance and provision of appropriate resources to schools and classrooms supporting systemic beliefs and values.

Ensuring horizontal and vertical alignment across the district in order to scale up what works, and discontinue what has not worked is the natural next step. A system-wide guaranteed and viable curriculum aligned with the purpose and direction of the district and with the Wyoming Content and Performance Standards will promote systemic alignment of resources including monetary, facility, systemic processes, and professional development and will provide systemic focus for the improvement of student performance.

Indicator 1.3

Progress Assessment

Sweetwater County School District #1

The school leadership and staff at all levels of the system commit to a culture that is based on shared values and beliefs about teaching and learning and supports challenging, equitable educational programs and learning experiences for all students that include achievement of learning, thinking, and life skills.

Indicator 3.2

Curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout the system are monitored and adjusted systematically in response to data from multiple assessments of student learning and an examination of professional practice.

Indicator 3.4

System and school leaders monitor and support the improvement of instructional practices of teachers to ensure student success.

Institution Response

Progress Status:

Implemented

Response:

The chosen goal above has nothing to do with our Improvement Priority. We are using it as a workaround in ASSIST. We will upload our plan as an attachment. Thank you!

Response:

Purpose and Direction

Sweetwater County School District #1 (SCSD#1) has put into place a systematic process directly addressing the AdvancED improvement priority. All actions are aligned to the SCSD#1 purpose and direction. "To provide a quality education for all students" and "As an innovative district, united with our community, we empower and inspire all students to academic excellence in pursuit of their interests and passions." All SCSD#1 stakeholders use these beliefs to guide decision-making in the district.

Sweetwater County School District #1 has provided more opportunities to increase teacher leader capacity after vetting staff to determine what was effective and what changes needed to occur within the district. Over the past two years, staff surveys and facilitated discussions with district leadership teams determined purposeful planning time, revision of the calendar reducing professional development time to gain student contact time, and building relationships as prioritized

Progress Assessment

Sweetwater County School District #1

needs. In addition, the district completed their five-year cycle of accreditation, which yielded an improvement priority focused on alignment of curriculum, instruction and assessment. An academic vision was created supporting these priorities, “To implement the Instructional Model which includes purposeful planning, quality instruction, resources, and assessment.” The academic vision aligns with the district mission, vision statement, and accreditation improvement priority while guiding the academic focus in a strategic manner. In order to implement this vision, the district implemented a teacher leadership program with the purpose of supporting staff in purposeful planning, quality lesson design and instruction, collection of resources, and the use of data on assessments to make instructional decisions. By utilizing teacher leaders to facilitate professional development, the district hopes to increase internal capacity, empower teachers and build ownership in the academic vision. All directors met with certified and classified staff in their departments and asked what was important, what should be kept and what we should eliminate. Staff believes that quality training and supporting students are the priorities. The operational vision is “Empower and celebrate staff by providing quality training and support focused on a commitment to students.” All operational certified and classified staff developed, adopted and are focused the district and operational vision.

Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment Alignment

In accordance with district policy and in conjunction with the Curriculum Leadership Institute (CLI), SCSD#1 began a systematic process to ensure horizontal and vertical alignment of curriculum, assessment and instruction. The process assures alignment to the Wyoming Department of Education’s Wyoming Content and Performance Standards as well as vertical K-12 alignment within our district, horizontal grade level/content area alignment and alignment of assessments. The district will systematically map all content areas, validate the curriculum, recommend adoption resource materials, and design common assessments. Each content area will systematically be revisited and revised in alignment with the state board standards review process. The long-range plan documents the timeline related to this process. The following content areas have been curriculum mapped during the 2014/2015 academic year: Math, Health/PE; during the 2015/2016 academic year: Information Literacy, English Language Arts and Foreign Language. Mapping will continue in 2017 in Social Studies and Fine & Performing Arts, and in 2017/2018 with Science and Career/Vocational Education in accordance with alignment and implementation of Wyoming Department of Education’s Wyoming Content and Performance Standards.

Stakeholders are involved in every aspect of this alignment process to ensure voice throughout the district. In Sweetwater County School District #1 this begins with the Community Curriculum Council (CCC) which serves as an advisory body and has a variety of representation including parents, community, stakeholders, teachers, administrators, district leadership and a board member. The CCC also supports development of the long-range plan to assist in alignment and implementation of curriculum, instruction and assessment. District-wide teacher representatives serve on various Subject Area Committees (SAC) for a three to four year term to support curriculum mapping, resource adoption and assessment development. Using a questionnaire distributed to all teachers, the SAC committee is responsible for gathering information from all teachers in the district and using the information to align curriculum maps with the Wyoming Department of Education’s Wyoming Content and Performance Standards. The curriculum map is then implemented with a built in feedback method where all teachers can complete the Curriculum Validation Survey to inform changes. The SAC committee will review the feedback, make changes, and finalize the curriculum map. A formal resource adoption process follows with input from district stakeholders to include teachers, administrators, and parents. Our Board of Trustees provides the final approval for all adopted resources. Following the adoption, the common assessment development begins with alignment to our curriculum map benchmarks. A validation timeline ensures that all staff have an opportunity to provide feedback on pacing and assessments. These components are communicated in a variety of modes to include a district-wide curriculum newsletter, and formalized training during professional development.

Professional Development

Progress Assessment

Sweetwater County School District #1

An on-going system of support occurs at all levels within the district and are differentiated to address the needs of staff based on a needs assessment given each year. For example, our Teacher Assistance Program (TAP) provides new teachers with a building mentor and designated meeting dates to ensure ongoing access to information. Special Education staff meets with district trainers and outside consultants to gain expertise in the most recent research and legal compliance issues. Title I and Title III staff engage in specific training to better assist students in reaching academic success. Content area teachers are aligned in vertical, horizontal and PLC grouping to effectively plan and implement quality lesson design. In order to support this differentiated approach, the district continues to build internal capacity. With the AdvancED external visitation team's notice of "pockets of excellence" in classrooms, the district worked to build capacity to support academic excellence in all classrooms by utilizing teacher leaders. A 40-member staff leadership team, consisting of teacher leaders, district department chairs and instructional facilitators meets regularly to plan, develop exemplar lessons, and implement professional development in the district. The professional development is focused on purposeful planning and quality instruction. PLC teams use the Instructional Planning Resource (IPR) to align, plan and implement quality instruction based from the curriculum maps. High effect size strategies are being studied and implemented into the IPRs. Instructional facilitators support the implementation of best classroom practices with all staff. A district of excellence is being created using teacher leaders to design, implement and support professional development. There is cohesive alignment between the CLI process and professional development. This alignment includes using curriculum maps to design instructional units, which includes a menu of instructional strategies, assessments and data team process and conversations during Professional Learning Community (PLC) time. In addition to providing support for quality lesson design during professional development days, book studies such as Hattie's high effect size strategies is made available to Achievement Monitoring Process (AMP) chairs, district department chairs, instructional teacher leaders, instructional facilitators, administrators and various schools. Quality lesson design supports the implementation of the curriculum map, supporting all students receive a guaranteed and viable curriculum. A portion of the IPR is dedicated to interventions and enrichment components of the lesson. This supports the differentiated needs of at-risk students, Special Education students, English Language learners, Free and Reduced lunch students and gifted students.

Resources

Teacher leaders, instructional facilitators and district department chair staff are our most valued resource. Teacher leaders are available at various grade levels and content areas within each school in the district. Instructional facilitators build capacity and ensure equity across the board. Utilizing our district staff as a resource not only values staff, it enhances retention and expertise within our community. In addition, our schools have adopted business partners that are essential resources to further the success of our students. For example, our business partners provide valuable job shadowing experiences, funding for incentives, financial resources for projects and provide input on program implementation to further students as they transition to careers and the workforce.

Resource/material adoptions follow a cyclical phase during the third year of the CLI process in most content areas. The adoption typically will occur after the curriculum has been written and validated. For example, the district adopted new math materials K-12 aligned to newly aligned curriculum maps. Staff will adopt new language arts materials during this academic year aligned to curriculum maps. Teachers are teaching to the curriculum map and looking forward to adopting district-wide resources to support student learning.

Technology is another aspect of resources within our district. New tools like Google docs, Google classrooms and SharePoint are being established and used to share IPRs, best practices, teacher resources, and assessment data. The Instructional Planning Resource (IPR) designed by teacher leaders, teacher collaborative groups, instructional facilitators and district department chairs are posted on SharePoint as exemplars of quality instruction. In addition, training is being provided to new teachers and at various building sites in the form of EdCamps and Technology rodeos in which staff have a variety of opportunities to learn and implement technology into lesson planning. One of our schools within the district was recently recognized by the Wyoming Department of Education within their Statewide Digital Learning Plan for their inclusion of on-line blended learning opportunities for students. These implementations are not only recognized within our district, but

Progress Assessment

Sweetwater County School District #1

monitored and recognized at a state level.

Monitoring

Monitoring for evidence, support and implementation takes many forms within the district to include: survey data, needs assessments, classroom observations, lesson plans and the data team process. Data reviews are conducted at the district, school and PLC team level. Data walls are found throughout the district monitoring student progress towards excellence. Surveys are collected after every professional development day. Teacher leaders, administrators and instructional facilitators analyze the surveys and the results are used to monitor and adjust professional development needs based on survey results. Timely assessment results are also available in monthly Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment newsletters. Needs assessment surveys, AdvancED surveys and climate surveys from parents, teachers and students are analyzed, reviewed annually and utilized to make necessary changes. Principals monitor teachers by participating in teacher PLC groups, reviewing IPRs, classroom observations, and through the district evaluation system. Principals also collect IPRs during professional development days and review/monitor implementation with teachers and students. Exemplars are available via SharePoint and Google docs for all in district employees. Teacher feedback and observation data is used to ensure all students receive a quality education. Principal PLC groups calibrate and collaborate to ensure that all systems of support are implemented equitably and with fidelity across the district. Principals also ensure that Reading Placement Pathways, outlining interventions are being accurately used with students in SCSD#1 to support an instructional-tiered support system. These interventions are reviewed each spring by measuring student achievement and effect size data to determine their effectiveness. A review process occurs annually using this data to ensure that all students are receiving a quality education and are placed appropriately in programs to meet their needs. Although many teacher leaders have been trained in the data teams process, data teams is in the beginning phases of implementation. All administrators and instructional facilitators, as well as some instructional teachers have been trained as Certified Data Team Trainers. On-site data team coaching has been made available to all schools during October 2016 and will reoccur in April 2017. Data teams implemented during PLC time use data to direct instructional decisions and determine progress towards proficiency of students. Finally at the district level, using the CLI process, our advisory CCC meets regularly to monitor, vet curriculum topics, to review curriculum maps created by the SAC, coordinate curriculum, review assessments and assessment data.

School Improvement: Student Achievement

Assessment data is analyzed and reviewed systematically with stakeholder groups. Stakeholder groups include the AdvancED steering committee (with parent, community and student representation), district leadership teams, teacher leadership groups and Achievement Monitoring Progress (AMP) building leadership teams as well as PLC teams. This data drives decision-making, goal setting as well as instruction and direction within the district. AMP teams analyze academic data as well as behavior, attendance and teacher data to inform decision-making. Academic excellence for all students is a focus throughout the district. Increasing student achievement is one school improvement goal. In SCSD#1, schools are using the state accountability model to drive goal setting in each building. Schools and the district have action plans in place to support student learning and staff success. Sweetwater County School District #1 systematically supports all schools in monitoring student progress and achieving goals. The district level improvement team meets periodically to monitor progress towards district goals. School Improvement plans are written based on the School Performance Report results. A systematic process is used to review improvement plans and provide descriptive feedback by other school leadership teams in a peer review model.

In analyzing our state and local student achievement data, students have made significant achievement gains in math and reading over the past two years. For example, on PAWS performance results, students have met their goals in math in grades 3, 4, 5, and 7 with minimal gains in grade 8. In reading, gains were made

Progress Assessment

Sweetwater County School District #1

in grades 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8. On ACT 11th grade results, three of the four content areas (math, reading, and science) showed an improvement in scores. Locally, Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) data, documented growth in reading over the past three years and over 60% of students are performing at or above grade level RIT in eight of the ten grade levels. Also, students have demonstrated growth when measured by the MAP Math assessment over the past three years.

School Improvement: Safety Initiative

To ensure the safety of all students and staff, SCSD#1 implemented a district-wide safety program, Standard Response Protocol (SRP), aligning district safety protocols with local police, fire and county sheriff protocols. All schools conduct monthly drills to practice protocols with students and staff. School Dude's Crisis Management app is used to distribute SCSD#1's new crisis management plan to all stakeholders. This app provides step-by-step instructions in the event of a school crisis. The SchoolWay app is also being utilized as a communication tool to stakeholders with regards to school activities and safety alerts. The SchoolWay app provides information via push notifications. The School Safety Timeline documents district trainings.

In summary, since the visit from the AdvancED external team, SCSD#1 has done many things to satisfy the improvement priority:

- Systemic alignment of standards, curriculum, teaching and assessment, which is supported by resources and staff development
- Formalized advocacy programs are present in our schools which will enhance the district's focus on rigor, relevance, relationships and student success
- Exemplars of excellent instruction exist in every building and are serving as models for improving instruction district wide
- Collaboration structures such as Professional Learning Communities provide staff opportunities for professional development, collegiality, and problem solving
- Evaluation and monitoring systems have been put in place using IPRs, curriculum maps and common assessments
- Data Teams process is being implemented into PLC teams to monitor and adjust instruction using common assessment data

The AdvancED Steering Committee, an advisory body, consisting of students, community members, parents, district directors and staff, continue to celebrate our successes and provide feedback on the district improvement plan and the accreditation progress report. School and district improvement plans are available at www.sweetwater1.org. In preparation for the 2018 visit, the AdvancED steering committee meetings will continue to provide advice, and empower, support and advocate for the success of each and every learner in Sweetwater County School District #1.

Attachments:

District Improvement Plan (Achievement)

Supporting Data for District Improvement

District Improvement Plan (Safety)

ACT Data

PAWS Math Data

PAWS Reading Data

Disaggregated PAWS Math

Disaggregated PAWS Reading

Progress Assessment

Sweetwater County School District #1

Disaggregated PAWS Science
PD Exit Survey Summary
PD Exit Survey Summary (current)
Data Teams Form
Data Teams form with Feedback
Website Evidence Links
IPR Sample for ELA
Sept Newsletter
October Newsletter
November Newsletter
December Newsletter
Sample Effect Size
Staff Needs Assessment Survey
Parent Needs Assessment Survey
School Safety Timeline

Reviewer Response

Status:

Response:

Diagnostic/Evaluation Criteria