

2009-2010 School Improvement Plan

(Reflection on DESE Essential Conditions for School Effectiveness)

- Potential Board Involvement

1. **Effective School Leadership:** commitment to the school's mission and strategies; teacher leadership and collaborative learning culture; supervision and evaluation; time and resources to support use of data for improvement planning

Seven Hills restructured the administrative model to provide more localized support to instructional teams. While the school Superintendent oversees strategic planning and instructional programming, the Academy Director and Assistant Academy Director each focus on a set of specific grade levels for support and supervision.

Instructional coaches facilitate data analysis and responsive lesson planning processes during collaborative meeting times. They also coordinate team participation in the professional learning community activities such as Lesson Study and Rounds. All teachers utilize a personalized professional growth plan model to set goals, develop action plans and monitor progress toward goal attainment.

- Independent evaluation of human resource allocation.

2. **Principal's Staffing Authority:** localized staffing decisions

Seven Hills has the responsibility to recruit the best possible teaching candidates and release any underperforming staff members (once supportive measures have been deemed unsuccessful). Hiring decisions are based upon a review of credentials and references, interviews with a hiring committee consisting of a school administrator, the instructional team and, when appropriate, students and parents and a model lesson. All teachers work on a year to year contract, with renewal and pay raises are contingent upon evaluations that are based upon a performance rubric.

- Recruitment support; Pre-Service Teacher Program Partnerships

3. **Effective District Systems of Support:** staffing; materials; operational needs

Seven Hills implements measures to be sure that teachers have adequate resources and support to do their jobs. Instructional materials are readily available. The biggest struggle the school has seen is in the recruitment of effective teachers. Despite advertising in a variety of print and online ads and hosting and participating in several in person and electronic job fairs, the certified candidate pool is slim. We have advertized paid professional development, internal opportunities for professional advancement and strong collegiality and support networks among the benefits of working at Seven Hills. In addition to our standard recruitment practices, the school has developed a credentialing scholarship for staff members interested in pursuing teaching certification and has worked toward developing partnerships with local universities. We have also developed

additional Instructional Coaching roles to intervene in situations where there are underperforming classrooms and to build a candidate pool for future openings. Additional support is needed in this area.

- See Above

4. **Coordinated Use of Resources and Adequate Budget Authority** human, financial and community resource allocation

The school Superintendent works closely with the school leadership team to determine appropriate resource allocations. Decisions are based upon impact to student learning, integrity of the school mission and valuing school personnel. Instructional coaches work with their teams to submit curriculum orders and manage their own supply and fieldtrip budgets.

- See above note on human resource allocation

5. **Family – School Relationships** systems of two-way communication; opportunities for participation

Seven Hills uses student agendas and Powerschool as the primary forums for home / school communication. In addition, teachers and parents regularly communicate via email, phone and face to face conferences. In addition to the five scheduled school conference days, Seven Hills offers monthly family events and workshops around personal and academic support. The Parent Guild and School Advisory Council both meet monthly to participate in fundraising and school improvement initiatives. Seven Hills struggles to get parent support by the way of follow through with homework completion, uniform and policy compliance and school preparedness. Support programs are available for students and families (tutoring, homework help, parent workshops – i.e. literacy night, math night, tech night, etc.) but participation is very limited.

- Parent partnership support

6. **Students’ Social, Emotional and Health Needs** creating a safe environment, coordinated student support services and universal breakfast, systems approach to behavior management, student involvement in self monitoring attendance and behavior

Seven Hills has a comprehensive physical and mental health program. All students participate in character education seminars as well as structured guidance classes. We utilized our AARA grant monies to support professional development for our staff and to hire a social worker, build a tiered “Bridge” program for students with significant emotional and behavioral needs and support our Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) initiatives. We partner with a local clinician to offer site based counseling to our students and are in the process of improving our protocol to

access wrap around services for students and families. We currently work with Big Brothers / Big Sisters and the National Guard and are in the process of setting up programs with Civil Air Patrol and Boy and Girl Scouts.

- Social worker role development

7. **Professional Development and Structures for Collaboration** job embedded training, content area coaching, collaborative planning time

Teachers have one hour per day of common planning time with their department members (grade level teams K,1; 2,3; and departments 4-8 – note: this is the first year that we departmentalized grades four and five) as well as forty five minutes at the end of each day for schoolwide collaborations. Coaches support the common planning times by helping teachers review achievement data and design appropriate instruction for students. In addition, eight full professional development days are built into the school calendar, along with five half days. New teachers also participate in a summer teaching academy and a biweekly New Teacher Support Group.

This year, we are focusing our training on standards based learning and assessment and differentiation. This will serve as a natural link into next year's emphasis on incorporating these areas into units developed using the Understanding By Design model.

Aligned Curriculum framework links; horizontal and vertical continuity;

Instructional teams created curriculum alignment charts and pacing calendars that served as the foundation for vertical alignment studies and the identification of “power standards” for each grade level and content area. The next step is to refine our common performance criteria and exemplars.

- Establish sister school to define high expectations

Effective Instruction purposeful planning; student engagement; varied techniques and materials

The Seven Hills academic coaches retreat this year focused on mentoring teachers on the characteristics of quality lesson design and engagement strategies. Coaches are using the tools developed over the last two years to facilitate collaborative planning and to provide feedback to each other. These documents also drive participation in the Lesson Study and Rounds professional learning community activities.

Seven Hills received grant monies to provide extensive staff development in the area of using interactive technologies to enhance learning in the classrooms and beyond.

Tiered Instruction Models, Adequate Learning Time and Additional Academic Support time on learning (core, supplemental, intensive); extended learning time

Seven Hills has a comprehensive three tiered model of instruction, including core and supplemental programming for all students. All students participate in daily enrichment or tutorial opportunities in the areas of math and English language arts.

Although extended learning opportunities have been carefully developed (summer programming, mcas module courses, homework help, supplemental educational services, ELL classes), attendance has been poor. The School Advisory Council has recruited parents and staff members to help develop programming that will be more appealing and accessible to families.

- Parent partnership support

Assessment benchmarking, progress monitoring, data analysis and action planning

The school has an assessment calendar outlining tools and timelines for standardized measurements to be used. In addition, thresholds have been set to define progress monitoring and intervention needs and to determine effectiveness of school programs and instruction. This year, we will pilot an additional CPI Mock MCAS exam to give students testing familiarity.

Staff members participate in “data days” to create action plans for addressing school, grade level, class and individual student needs. Progress monitoring data is used on an ongoing basis to measure the effectiveness of instruction and interventions.

After a year long subcommittee study, the school has adopted a standards based reporting system. This was done not only to ensure the continuity and purposefulness of instruction but also to help students and families understand and support learning goals.

Dissemination of Best Practices

Seven Hills partners with the Learning First Foundation to sponsor an annual Summer Teaching Academy and a springtime Special Subject Teaching Showcase. We also visit undergraduate classes as guest presenters and frequently host site based workshops and graduate level courses that are open to the public. Although we frequently attract teachers from across the state, rarely do we find participants from our sending district.

- University and sending district partnerships

2009-2010 School Improvement Plan
(Draft)

Increase percentage of students meeting grade level standards in ELA and Math.

Internal Assessment Goal = 70% or more on benchmark, 90% or more meeting growth target

ELA:

MCAS Improvement Target (5 point gain over 09 CPI):

Grade 3 = 81.6 Grade 4 = 59.9 Grade 5 = 69 Grade 6 = 71.9

Grade 7 = 77 Grade 8 = 94.9

Gains required to meet state target (90.2 CPI):

Grade 3 = 13.6 Grade 4 = 35.3 Grade 5 = 26.2 Grade 6 = 23.3

Grade 7 = 18.2 Grade 8 = .3

Math:

MCAS Improvement Target (6.9 point gain over 09 CPI):

Grade 3 = 78.7 Grade 4 = 58.5 Grade 5 = 50.9 Grade 6 = 71.4

Grade 7 = 62.6 Grade 8 = 73.2

Gains required to meet state target (84.3 CPI):

Grade 3 = 12.5 Grade 4 = 32.7 Grade 5 = 40.3 Grade 6 = 19.8

Grade 7 = 28.6 Grade 8 = 18

- Enhance School Structures to Increase Curricular Expertise
 - Departmentalize grades 4 and 5
 - Provide increased support to content area coaches
 - Specialize special education supports within content areas
 - Develop and utilize a lesson design dialog sheet to guide coaching / feedback sessions
 - Utilize the Lesson Study and Rounds programs to support peer coaching
- Motivate Students to Want to Achieve
 - Help students set personal goals and recognize how school can help them achieve those goals.
 - Enhance focus on high school and college options and goals starting in K.
 - Link students with adult mentors in the school and community.
 - Incorporate content based guest speakers, occupational fieldtrips
 - Utilize a Standards Based Report Card to provide students and families with clear and attainable learning goals for each grade level
 - Help students monitor their own academic growth and goal attainment.
 - Provide genuine audiences for learning initiatives (science fair, author's chairs, etc.)
 - Connect learning with real life applications
 - Monitor implementation of identified engagement and participation strategies
- Provide Extended Learning Time Opportunities
 - Coordinate SES tutoring services to ensure connections to student and school goals
 - Provide NJHS peer tutoring and homework help
 - Host student / parent MCAS sessions and curriculum nights
 - Provide online activities linked to report card standards
- Tighten horizontal and vertical curriculum alignment to ensure continuity of instructional programs.
 - Ensure usage of alignment charts, pacing calendars and progress monitoring / standards acquisition data to drive planning.
 - Follow Up on Differentiated Instruction Book Study and PD
 - Classroom Structures
 - Small Group Targeted Direct Instruction

- Data Driven Content Decisions for Independent Work, Tutorials, Technology Centers, etc.
- Varied Methodology
- Common Performance Criteria - Measurements
 - Reteaching / Enriching Techniques
- Next Step - Move toward Understanding By Design model
- Implement Identified Strategies for Improvement
 - ELA
 - Expose students to high quality literature and incorporate choices through programs such as Accelerated Reader and Think.com
 - Engage students in reciprocal teaching practices that incorporate Bloom's taxonomy to encourage higher level thinking.
 - Help students utilize open response strategies and our self reflection process to improve written response.
 - Help students use the various steps of writing workshop, including critical conferencing, to improve writing.
 - Implement school vocabulary and grammar protocols to support development in these areas.
 - Utilize CPI Mock MCAS Benchmarks to adjust instruction according to needs.
 - Access targeted centers for check out from the Teacher Resource Library.
 - Math
 - Apply problem solving protocols to mcas style questions.
 - Utilize *Stand Out Math* to reinforce key vocabulary and concepts.
 - Have students utilize math reference sheets and "brain dumps" for regular assessments.
 - Utilize the protocol sheets to guide fact mastery.
 - Effectively utilize interactive technologies to support differentiated learning.
 - Utilize CPI Mock MCAS Benchmarks to adjust instruction according to needs.
 - Access targeted centers for check out from the Teacher Resource Library.
 - Utilize curriculum extensions (explorations, etc.) for enrichment.
 - Science
 - Complete training cycle for STEP program.
 - Embed the standardized lab protocol related to the scientific process through FOSS, DSM and STEP programs.
 - Utilize CPI Mock MCAS Benchmarks to adjust instruction according to needs.
 - Social Studies
 - Implement interactive History Alive lessons.
 - Incorporate quality literature and primary sources into learning experiences.
 - Utilize the five themes of geography as the cornerstone for the K-8 program.
 - Cross Curricular Strategies
 - Help students gain independence with Key 3 strategies and reciprocal teaching across the content areas.
 - Incorporate strategies outlined in *Test Talk* into the daily repertoire.
 - Utilize the art integration charts to reinforce key concepts throughout the content areas.
 - Provide families with online links to the standards in order to practice at home.
 - Review concrete knowledge through Quizbowls, Intensives, etc.

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Increase our ability to meet individual learning needs.

- Ensure that all teachers get trained in SEI categories 1-3 and also category 4 for ELA teachers.
- Implement enhanced ELD programming for ELL students.
- Ensure that teachers use the ELPBO to guide lesson planning for ELL students.
- Use the Alternate MCAS resource guide to guide lesson planning for IEP students, especially pull out groups.
- Increase student ability to use MCAS accommodations appropriately all year.
- Increase the intensity of tutorials and Response to Intervention (RTI).
- Enhance the usage of technology to support curriculum and individualize instruction.
- Increase training, support and supervision for the six models of co-teaching.
- Enhance opportunities for after school or weekend mcas prep, tutoring and interest exploration.
 - SAC ELL support project
- Host failure to progress meetings for students on IEP's who are not making gains.
- Increase oversight of SHELL and create forums for students to showcase work.
- Utilize Professional Growth Plans to individualize professional development and track progress toward meeting personal goals.
- Increase opportunities for teachers to learn from other teachers through peer observations, collaboration and school visits.

Build a positive culture for learning throughout the building.

- Increase professional conversations about teaching and learning.
 - Enhance the Lesson Study and Rounds models of professional development.
 - Utilize guiding documents to provide mentoring to team members.
 - Engagement Self Study
 - Lesson Development Dialog Guide
 - Utilize data when developing professional growth plans as living documents guiding interactions and support.
- Consistently model the attitudes and behaviors that we hope to see in our students.
- Enhance Positive Behavior Support (PBIS) program.
 - Direct instruction (guidance classes, character education programs, code of conduct, core values)
 - Monitoring and recognitions systems
 - Data collection and intervention planning (FASST, Sped)
- Increase parent involvement and education about school expectations.
- Increase consistency with implementation of effective class meetings and character education programming.
- Implement grade level and academy wide core value events and celebrations of quality work and accomplishments.
- Encourage participation in school challenges (i.e. interactive bulletin boards, newsletter challenges, ELL contests, etc.)
- Enhance partnership with local mental health service providers to offer onsite counseling and home visits as well as in specially designed counseling groups.
 - Utilize National Guard and Big Brothers and Big Sisters to effectively support students.
 - Explore partnerships with Civil Air Patrol and Scouts.
- Enhance guidance programming K-5.
- Develop meaningful relationships within the community. (Honor a Hero, Adopt a Cause, Career Links, Performances and Displays, Community Service).

Increase parent involvement in children's educational experiences.

- Increase staff awareness of and appreciation for cultural differences.

- Provide ELL family support.
- Increase participation in *Guiding Good Choices* and other parenting classes designed to meet parents' stated needs.
- Increase opportunities for parents to learn about ways to help their children succeed in school.
- Increase opportunities for parents to network with one another.
- Increase parent usage of technology to support communication (log on progress reports, group email postings, incentives).

Increase our ability to disseminate best practices.

- Build partnerships with local universities.
- Host open house observation days, career fairs and best practice showcases throughout the year.
- Partner with Learning First Foundation to host Summer Teaching Academy and online Professional Help Desk.
- Present at professional conferences.
- Submit articles for publication.