

Section 6: Implementation of the Plan and Documentation of Results

Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the School Improvement Plan

School Name: Brevard High School

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I. Introduction

A. General Comments

The School Improvement Plan goals, indicators, and action steps are designed to prepare students to be globally competitive and successful. The Brevard High School Improvement Team met regularly each six weeks during the 2007-08 school year. The first two meetings were used to put the final touches on the creation of the 2007-10 School Improvement Plan. The committee analyzed data related Priority areas before deciding on specific targets for improvement. The School Improvement Team (SIT) worked diligently to determine the focus for improvement at BHS for the next three years. The SIT for Brevard High School consists of 16 members that include teachers, parents, and administrators. Priority Areas 1 through 5 were given individual attention in order to identify the areas that the committee felt were of the highest priority. All Priority goals and indicators are directly aligned to State and TCS district priorities and goals. Action steps include initiatives to support students academically, both inside and outside of the classroom; to have open lines of communication with parents regarding student progress; to ensure the right of students to be safe and healthy while they attend school; and, to provide parents, staff, and students with opportunities to be more aware of the symptoms and use of illegal substances. The School Improvement Team believes that in order to prepare students to compete globally, teachers must be provided adequate opportunities for professional development. Professional development activities provide faculty with the opportunity for updates in content, methodology, and technology essential to prepare students for academic success. Effective communication must exist between administration and faculty members to ensure that the goals of the school are clearly articulated, understood, and implemented. It is important that all stakeholders have a working knowledge of the strategic plan for continued academic growth. All of the Priority Goals are aligned to achieve measurable outcomes and results by matching action steps with clearly defined goals for improvement. Ultimately, the mission of BHS is to prepare students for a successful future, and the School Improvement Plan serves as a road map toward that goal.

B. Globally-Competitive Students

The district's first strategic priority states, "Transylvania County Schools will produce globally competitive students". The SIT decided that the indicator for Priority One is that BHS will once again become an Honor School of Excellence with High Academic Change. The SIT agreed on five action steps to assist Brevard High School in achieving the goal of 90 percent proficiency under North Carolina's ABCs Program. The five action steps include: aligning pacing and lesson plans to the North Carolina Standard Course of Study (NCSCS), revising the academic remediation program to provide support outside the regular school day, realigning the responsibilities of the BHS guidance department to provide comprehensive student services, and implementing the articulated Safety Net plan.

All of the action steps were implemented during the 2007-08 school year and continue to be used with minimal modifications to the original plan. Teachers on the TPAI evaluation system are asked to turn in lesson plans weekly, and all teachers submit pacing guides at the beginning of each semester. This action step is designed to support all new teachers in correctly aligning their pacing guides and lesson plans with the NCSCS. Career teachers are required to have their lesson plans available upon the request of the school's administration. The remediation program has been revised to reflect the term Academic Coaching. Before-school and after-school labs are used extensively to provide opportunities for additional academic support. The guidance

department has been reorganized to provide comprehensive student services including counseling, academic advisement, college preparation, and transition programs. The articulated Safety Net Plan was implemented to provide students who struggle with academic support to increase their chances of being successful in school. Because this was the first year of the School Improvement Plan, changes were not implemented during the school year.

C. 21st Century Professionals

The district's second strategic priority states that every educational professional will have 21st Century preparation and access to ongoing high quality professional development. The action steps designed for Priority 2 at Brevard High directly reflect the desire of the SIT to provide high quality staff development opportunities for the staff at BHS. Action steps include the following: staff will participate in a root-cause analysis of staff development needs; each teacher will complete one high quality staff development activity annually; teachers will identify specific professional development needs that can be facilitated in a learning community; alternative staff development opportunities will be communicated to teachers; and, BHS will provide two high quality professional development opportunities each year.

Major targets for this priority are to make more staff development opportunities available and to make the staff more aware of other opportunities available. These action steps are designed to provide staff members with the tools to develop content specific high quality activities that will in turn provide students with the skills needed to be successful. During the 2007-08 school year BHS offered two high quality staff development opportunities on-site, one focusing on technology integration using the proven Intel model, and another emphasizing Spanish for Educators.

D. Healthy and Responsible Students

The district's third strategic priority states that every school will promote a healthy, active lifestyle where students are encouraged to make responsible choices. The BHS School Improvement Team concluded from analysis of 2008 stakeholder satisfaction survey data that the use of illegal substances is an ongoing concern that stakeholders feel should be addressed. The consensus of the SIT is that the more people who are aware of and informed of the types of drugs and their symptoms, the bigger positive impact drug awareness can have within the school and community. The action steps designed to produce improvement for this indicator are: SIT and administration will research and evaluate the perception of the use of illegal substances by students at BHS; a root cause analysis of faculty perceptions of the use of illegal substances; data from the Communities that Care survey will be analyzed to determine areas of need; and, the "Safe Dates Program" will be implemented and evaluated with regards to usefulness as related to the use of illegal substances.

Two programs were implemented during the school year to make students and parents more aware of the behaviors surrounding drug and alcohol abuse. A root cause analysis with the faculty indicated that they felt the question on the survey was worded badly and that the results are therefore not very reliable. Substance abuse can take many forms and we feel that the more informed all stakeholders are of the use and abuse of these substances the better students can be supported to make responsible choices.

E. Leadership

The district's fourth strategic priority states that leadership will guide innovation in Transylvania County Schools. Related school goals seek to ensure that the system's education priorities are responsive to the needs of family, community, and business customers. The SIT carefully reviewed the data available for this priority and decided that the 2008 stakeholder satisfaction survey of parent is a reasonable indicator of the state of communication that exists between family and school. After thoughtfully reviewing available survey data, the SIT decided that improvement of item PRN- 03 ("My child's teachers keep me informed of his or her performance in school") would be the focus of the School Improvement Plan. Related action steps include the following: implementation of a school wide parent communication initiative, increasing the number of parents registered in the Honeywell Alert System, having students return signed progress reports and report cards, increasing the number of parent e-mail addresses available in an e-mail bank, recruiting parents for the Principal's Communication Council, and implementing BHS's Safety Net Plan.

Each of these action steps have been developed to keep parents better informed of student progress. The Honeywell Instant Alert system has been replaced with a system that uses parent phone numbers in the NCWISE student information system. The push to register parent e-mails has resulted in a 10% increase, and this will be an ongoing action step. Another major initiative included the implementation of BHS's Safety Net Program. This program is designed to actively support students who are struggling academically. BHS wants make sure that students and their parents are aware of academic coaching opportunities when a student first shows signs of struggling. Students are given incentives to return signed progress reports and the administration assists with calling parents of students who do not return their reports. The principal and the graphics class designed a Good News Card that teachers are encouraged to send to parents of students to let them know how well things are going at school. Communication is the key to success for students, and the SIT will continue to look for ways to improve communication with parents.

F. 21st Century Systems

The district's fifth and final strategic priority states, "Transylvania County Schools will be governed and supported by 21st Century Systems." The related improvement goal within this priority is that support processes within the education system are aligned to achieve high performance. The indicator at BHS states, "Results to item STF-28 ("Communication between staff and school administration is effective") on the annual Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey will increase to 90%." The action steps designed to support those goals include the following: staff will participate in a root cause analysis to determine specific areas for communication improvement and specific solutions; monthly Instructional Leader Meetings will be held for the purpose of dissemination of information; and, interim staff surveys will be used to determine current perceptions of administration and staff communication.

Faculty members were forthcoming in discussing ways that communication could be more effective. Administrators looked at available survey data and actively solicited input from teachers to develop improved internal communication methods. Suggestions were implemented and ongoing communication is a priority for all administrators. A mid-semester survey was completed to see if progress was being made or if there were new issues to address, and the area will continue to be a high priority at BHS.

II. Summary of Results

A. Globally-Competitive Students

BHS scored a 79.01% total proficiency under the North Carolina ABC's Program accountability model. This is an increase over the 2005-06 school year score of 76.1%, but is significantly lower than the scores of the 2004-05 (90.5%) and 2005-06 (85.7%) school years. Over time, proficiency composites have fluctuated from a high of 90.5%, which made Brevard High School the first comprehensive public high school to achieve School of Excellence status in North Carolina, to a low of 76.1% during the 2005-06 school year. Scores in each of the EOC areas have fluctuated since the 2004-05 school year; all scores are increasing and bringing us closer to the goal of 90% in all EOC areas. English I has fluctuated over the past four years with a high of 91.3% in 2005-06 to a low of 80% in 2006-07. This past year's score of 81.6% is an increase over the previous year and has brought us closer to our three-year goal. Algebra I has also fluctuated 19 percentage points within the last four years, from a high of 90.8% during the 2005-06 school year to a low of 71% in 2006-07. Algebra I is an area that will continue to be of concern. The 2007-08 proficiency rate of 72.2% shows a slight increase over the previous year. Algebra II posted 82.1% for the 2007-08 school year, a net gain of 2.1 percentage points over the low of 79% in 2006-07. The highest score for BHS in Algebra II is 95% in 2004-05. Geometry increased dramatically last year with a score of 92.4%, a 10.2 percentage point gain from a low of 82% the previous year. Social studies scores are important, and we are looking for ways to support those students who struggle academically to increase their chances of being successful in Civics and U.S. History. Scores in Civics have fluctuated from a low of 68.8% in 2005-06 to 72.9% in 2007-08. U.S. History has increased scores 5.4 percentage points from a low of 70% in 2006-07 to 75.4% in 2007-08. Science has the highest scores in the school. Chemistry and Physics show consistently strong scores. Current scores of 98.7% and 100% are an increase from 95% in the three previous years. Biology's 83.1% in 2007-08 is a slight increase over the low score of 82% in 2005-06. Physical Science is at an all time low of 68.4%. BHS is working hard to achieve the status of School of Excellence with high growth, by the 2009-10 school year. During the past year a gain of almost three percentage points was achieved and moves BHS toward the goal of 90% overall proficiency.

B. 21st Century Professionals

Promoting lifelong learning is a priority at BHS. The more tools faculty members have to teach using high quality strategies, the more students will be prepared to become independent thinkers and lifelong learners. 63% of faculty members feel that there are adequate opportunities for professional staff development focused on instruction. The 2007 stakeholder satisfaction survey also indicated that 63% of the faculty felt there were adequate opportunities for professional staff development. Despite the opportunity for two high quality staff development activities on campus, the SIT was not able to effect change and produce gains toward the goal of 84% on the survey. This is a downward trend from a high of 92% in 2005. This item has fluctuated over the nine years of the survey, but the 2007 and 2008 percentages for this item are at an all time low. The SIT will need to focus carefully on staff development focused on instruction for the next two school years in order to reach the goal of 84% on this item. Cuts in the number of teacher workdays available for staff development is an issue that forces administration to be innovative when providing high quality staff development activities focused on instruction.

C. Healthy and Responsible Students

The focus for this priority is to make parents, students, and faculty members more aware of substance abuse at BHS. There were several initiatives aimed at increasing the awareness of all types of substance abuse implemented during the 2007-08 school year. Several more programs are planned for the 2008-09 school year. During the 2007-08 school year the "Safe Dates" program was implemented in 9th grade Health and PE classes. This program is designed make all students aware of behaviors to recognize and avoid when dating, including the use of recreational drugs and date rape drugs. In the spring semester, BHS hosted a community program titled "Risky Behaviors" that detailed behaviors and signs to be aware of in teens including the symptoms and signs of substance abuse. The SIT was able to make 3% gains with respect to both parents and students on the 2008 TCS survey. The staff of BHS showed a decrease of 10% in this item. The goal for this priority is to increase the awareness of the substance abuse problem at BHS. Root cause analysis showed that the faculty felt that that substance abuse is a broader community issue, and that BHS is not the origin of the problem. Stakeholders suggested that the question is worded so that it is not easily understood, and that the results might not therefore be interpreted correctly. They also indicated that they have been asking for this particular item to be removed or reworded for several years to make the data more effective. Rewording of the item in recent years did not yield notable changes in resulting data. The SIT will continue to work hard to ensure that all stakeholders are more aware of substance abuse and the risky behaviors that accompany it. The SIT will focus carefully on this indicator to increase awareness of substance abuse regardless of the percentages reflected in the survey.

D. Leadership

Communication with parents regarding their children's progress is of the utmost importance. The key to strong school-family relationships is good communication, and students are better supported if we take a holistic approach to student achievement. During the 2007-08 school year, BHS made a huge effort to increase communication between the school and home. The School Improvement Team is pleased that progress was made in all areas during the 2007-08 school year. Parent satisfaction survey results indicate that parents are more informed of their students' progress at BHS. Survey item # 3 results for 2008 indicate that 9% more parents believe that teachers keep them informed of their child's progress than in 2007. This gain from 73% to 82% indicates that the action steps implemented so far have been effective. Teachers at BHS are making an intense and concerted effort to keep parents informed of student progress through the use of e-mails and progress reports. The 2007-08 school year's satisfaction level of 82% is the highest that has been received by BHS since initial data was recorded in 2000. Results for this item have fluctuated over the last nine school years from 74% to 82%, with a low of 70% in 2004. The SIT believes that it has made significant progress toward the 2010 goal of 85% of parents indicating that teachers keep them informed of their child's progress.

E. 21st Century Systems

Effective communication is a must between faculty and administration. The priority five goal states that Transylvania County Schools will be governed and supported by 21st Century Systems. The related school goal for this priority is that support processes within the education system are aligned to achieve high performance. The indicator for BHS states, "Results to item STF-28 ("Communication between staff and school administration is effective") on the annual Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey will increase to 90%." Actions steps are designed to increase the communication between faculty and administration. Administration used faculty suggestions to

implement a weekly information newsletter and sends out other pertinent information as needed. Dates for progress reports, report cards, and other necessary information is posted to the BHS Activity Calendar and to the personal e-mails of faculty and staff. Exam schedules, curriculum guide development, and registration timelines are given out in a timely manner and are designed to create the least interference with instructional time. The largest gain of all indicators used for this plan is within this priority area. In 2007, the related staff indicator showed that 47% of faculty believed communication between teachers and administrators was effective -- the lowest satisfaction rate in nine years. The SIT implemented action steps to improve this situation and was able to increase this score by 13 percentage points to 60% in 2008. Percentages for this item have ranged from a high of 98% in 2004 to a low of 47% in 2006. This is a major area of concern, and the School Improvement Team will continue to search for and implement strategies to increase the effectiveness of communication between faculty and administration.

III. Reflections and Lessons Learned

An analysis of school improvement efforts during the 2007-08 school year revealed that a new organizational structure that involved a larger number of stakeholders was needed for the BHS School Improvement Team. The School Improvement Team was in transition with a new chair and organization during the 2007-08 school year. Stakeholders analyzed performance data and will be making changes to respond to identified target areas as this plan progresses. Data indicates that the area in need of the most effort at this time is staff awareness of the availability of staff development focused to instruction. BHS will continue to offer two high quality staff development opportunities per year and to make staff aware of the opportunity of other types of staff development. We will also research the faculty's perception of the availability of professional development. Traditionally the staff development opportunities that were available for teachers focused on attending one to three day workshops and conferences; this has changed to reflect development that is focused on instruction and yields best practice strategies. It is a challenge to change staff member perceptions to reflect current educational trends and mandates that all staff must complete one high quality professional development activity per year. Earning high quality CEU's is now a federal mandate. The decrease in the amount of available teacher workdays has created the necessity to be creative in providing on-site high quality professional development opportunities. The Priority 2 Committee will continue to look for ways to improve the awareness and delivery of quality staff development.

The priority three goal is perhaps the toughest to evaluate. The related stakeholder survey items read, "Illegal substances are not a problem at my child's school", "Illegal substance abuse at my school is not a problem", and "Substance abuse is not a problem at my school". Stakeholders have suggested that the wording of the question is confusing. Regardless of the question, the SIT feels that the use of illegal substance is an area that must be addressed. There are no mandated methods to raise the awareness of the use of illegal drugs. The SIT has used and will continue to use every available opportunity to get this important message across. Sources from the Sheriff's Department indicate that as many as 10% of students use illegal substances on a regular basis.

The priority four subcommittee focused on teacher and parent communication. A huge effort continues from BHS faculty to increase the amount of parent communication. Parent communication is an extremely important indicator of the success of students. The SIP showed the most progress in the area of staff and administration communication. While the percentage of teachers who feel that communication is effective is at 60%, this level reflects a big improvement over the previous year's rate of 47%.

The SIT organization has gone through some significant changes in the past two years. The original organization of the School Improvement Team meetings produced much dialogue and not enough actual progress. The reorganization of the structure of the SIT will be closely monitored to determine if the change produces positive results. The past year has been a learning experience, and the School Improvement Team is looking forward to addressing the needs of the students, parents, and faculty at BHS.

IV. Next Steps

The Brevard High School Improvement Team will meet every six weeks during the 2008-09 school year; at the end of that time, the meeting schedule will be reevaluated to determine if that schedule best meets the needs of the school. The reorganized team reflects a subcommittee for each priority area led by co-chairs designed as a work group. Each subcommittee should include representatives from each stakeholder group -- faculty, parents, community members, and students. The co-chairs for each subcommittee meet as a steering committee before each School Improvement Team meeting to determine the reports to be made and the specific work to be done during the School Improvement meeting. All stakeholders from each committee will be invited to the School Improvement Team meeting held each six weeks. The committees will evaluate available data and communicate by e-mail, phone and face-to-face meetings determined by each group to meet their specific needs. The reorganization will be in place through the remainder of this school improvement planning cycle and will be evaluated at the end of that time for its effectiveness.

The School Improvement Team determined that we should continue to look for ways to improve student achievement and focus specifically on the action steps currently in place to affect student improvement. The priority one subcommittee decided that the Safety Net Program should be amended. An internal evaluation indicated that a more proactive and timely system was needed to support students struggling academically by the development of Personalized Education Plans (PEP's) for each student. The new process involves looking at student academic progress at the end of each three weeks of school rather than at four and one-half weeks. Care Team members assign each student with two, three, or four failed classes to a teacher for the PEP meeting. This process allows for communication of student academic issues to all stakeholders in a more timely manner and provides academic intervention for struggling students earlier in each semester.

Changes for the priority two subcommittee are essential. The staff survey from 2008 showed no gain in the percentage of teachers who felt that adequate staff development opportunities are available to them. Teachers will be asked to participate in a Professional Learning Community and implement best practices in the classroom. Each teacher will be given lists of professional staff development opportunities available by email and a shared folder. The perception of teachers that quality staff development is available as workshops and conferences is hard to eliminate, and tight funding dictates that funds are to provide activities where large numbers of faculty can participate. A mid-year survey will be conducted again this year to see current trends in staff development issues.

The priority three subcommittee evaluated the progress made last year and renewed its commitment to raising the awareness of illegal substance abuse at BHS. The survey item that deals with the use of illegal substances at BHS is worded in a way that confuses the stakeholders taking the survey. Regardless of the wording, though, BHS is committed to strategies that raise the awareness of illegal substance abuse and increase stakeholder awareness of the types and symptoms of substance abuse. During the 2008-09 school year, three activities are planned to provide an increased awareness of illegal substance abuse. The first item is a program scheduled October 21st for students, parents, faculty, and community on prescription drugs. The second scheduled activity is "Drug Awareness Week," October 27-31, 2008. The Leadership class at BHS planned a week of drug awareness activities ending with a guest speaker from the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation on the dangers of prescription drugs. The third activity, scheduled for November, is a drug identification and symptom awareness program for the faculty given by Sheriff David Mahoney. Progress will be evaluated in the first semester and information will be used to implement activities during the second semester.

The Priority Four Committee has evaluated the available data from the 2008 parent satisfaction survey to identify strategies to increase communication between teachers and parents. BHS will continue the use of good news postcards, quarterly newsletters, and instant alert messages. The SIT will gather parent e-mail addresses for an e-mail bank and ask parents to serve on the Principal's Communication Council. We will also write articles for the local newspapers in order to keep parents updated regarding school activities.

Priority Five is continuing to work on communication strategies for faculty and administration. Instructional leader meetings will continue, and surveys will be given to determine the target areas for action. The Principal's Communication Council will continue to meet to determine the needs of the faculty and areas for improvement. Administration will continue to hold Monday morning faculty meetings, publish informational newsletters, and circulate emails. The faculty will continue to be encouraged to use GroupWise calendars on a regular basis, and administration will continue to post group appointments to keep faculty updated on what is happening at BHS. The School Improvement Team is dedicated to providing educational opportunities for all students and to preparing them for success through their high school years and beyond.