

Section 6: Implementation of the Plan and Documentation of Results

Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the School Improvement Plan

School Name: TC Henderson Elementary School

Principal: Tony Meachum

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I. Introduction

A. General Comments

The TCH School Improvement Team has been actively involved in providing leadership and support for the implementation of the current School Improvement Plan since its approval in October of 2007. Members of the TCH SIT meet and review progress in each of the five strategic priority areas on a regular basis. The priority subcommittees also meet on a regular basis and work towards achieving the goals of the School Improvement Plan. These priority committees also actively track, with data, our school's progress towards the attainment of the various goals. We ended the 2007 - 2008 school year by looking at the progress made towards each of the goals identified in our current 2007 - 2010 School Improvement Plan. The 2008 - 2009 school year is beginning with a continuation of that process. Throughout this report, you will find an in-depth analysis of the progress we are making toward achieving our goals of Producing Globally Competitive Students; Attaining Education Professionals who have 21st Century Preparation and Access to High Quality Professional Development; Promoting Healthy, Active Lifestyles Among Our Students; Leadership Development; and, the implementation of 21st Century Systems.

The composition of the TC Henderson's School Improvement Team changed recently due to the inclusion of new parent representatives. The principal, teacher representatives, and instructional assistant representatives remain basically the same as the 2007 - 2008 school year. Meetings of the full team are held quarterly, at a minimum. Priority Subcommittees meet as needed, and are chaired by regular members of the School Improvement Team.

All goals and objectives remain the same for the School Improvement Plan for the 2008 - 2009 school year. However, some strategies have been eliminated, while some additional strategies have been implemented just for the 2008 - 2009 school year. In addition, some existing strategies have been fine-tuned to more positively impact our school wide goals. Details follow regarding the progress made during the 2007 - 2008 school year.

In general, the School Improvement Team has made adequate progress toward meeting the goals as outlined in the current School Improvement Plan. We continue to look for effective strategies to improve academic performance, as measured by growth and proficiency rates on the End-Of-Grade Tests!

B. Globally-Competitive Students

One of the major initiatives for the 2007 - 2008 school year in the arena of promoting high student academic performance was the creation of writing portfolios to track students' progress in the writing process across grades K - 5. This was fully accomplished, and these portfolios have now moved up with each student to their current teacher and grade. A school-wide focus on writing and teaching specific spelling rules was also implemented to ensure students would improve their writing conventions across all curricular areas.

In addition, we identified particular students who were struggling in at least one aspect of their lives -- academically, personally, socially, psychologically, physically, etc. -- and connected them with a volunteer mentor. This school-wide mentoring program was hugely successful for the students and the mentors who were involved during the 2007 - 2008 school year.

In order to put children more in charge of their learning, we also began the implementation of student-led digital portfolio conferencing during the past school year. Students in grades 2 - 5 were trained and then allowed to lead their own parent/student conferences, which included their digital student portfolios, during the 2007 2008 school year. In other words, students were placed in charge of their own learning, and in communicating this progress to their parents.

Other initiatives in this area that seemed to make a positive impact on student growth included implementation of the "Mountain Math" program, expanding the utilization of our Accelerated Math Program, more use of our Math and Reading Renaissance Program, implementing our employment of Education City software, expanding our use of Accelerated Reader, implementing Essential Questions, beginning attendance awards for students, implementing an after-school "Academic Coaching" program, implementing our Safety Net Plan, utilizing school-wide Math Facts program, and employing Academic Coaches during the school day.

After reviewing the historical performance of Math EOGs at TC Henderson, we restructured our plan for the utilization of our Academic Coaches in January 2008 to begin providing intensive intervention for students in grades 3 - 5.

C. 21st Century Professionals

During the 2007 - 2008 school year, the major initiatives undertaken at TC as a result of the SIT goals in the area of staff development included "Student-Led Digital Portfolio Conferencing," Math and Reading Renaissance training, LCD Projector training, and "Research-Proven Best Practices" training. We also began grade level and vertical articulation meetings where the topics usually centered on curriculum and student learning. As a result, we are still in the infancy stage of creating and building a Professional Learning Community at TC Henderson.

About mid-year, it became obvious that many of our staff members needed additional training in the Accelerated Reader Program, Education City, and Study Island programs. Thus, this training was quickly implemented. More staff development funds were also allocated during the 2007 - 2008 school year for our certified staff members to attend professional workshops and conferences off of campus. When they returned to school, the workshop attendees were then expected to share what they learned with our entire staff at the next staff meeting.

We put a special emphasis on staff development and follow-up coaching during the past school year. This was a result of our recent staff customer survey results, which indicated a real need for focused, quality staff development opportunities.

However, we have yet to accomplish one of our strategies in this arena, which is to create a specific location on the web to post all High Quality staff development opportunities in one convenient location.

D. Healthy and Responsible Students

The major initiative undertaken in this arena during the 2007 - 2008 school year was to promote a healthy, active lifestyle where students were encouraged to make responsible choices. Here at TC we tracked longitudinally each students' B.M.I. (Body Mass Index) throughout the school year. We also periodically assessed each students' level of fitness through the use of the President's Challenge Physical Fitness program. We also are fortunate to be the only elementary school in our system where every child participates in a physical education class everyday with a

fully-certified PE teacher. In addition, in our efforts to enhance the physical fitness of our students during the 2007 -2008 school year, we expanded our before-school Intramurals program! During the 2007 -2008 school year, we averaged about (50) students per morning who participated in this program.

The principal also sent home a letter to parents reinforcing the importance of children bringing healthy snacks to school on a daily basis. During the 2007 - 2008 school year, the Eblen Foundation "healthy snacks" program was also begun.

The "family fitness contracts" were not put in place due to the number of other items that were implemented in its place within this particular priority area.

E. Leadership

The major initiative undertaken was to improve the leadership within and outside of the school setting. Action steps implemented to further our major initiatives were to develop and implement a school-wide mentoring program, to increase the number of school-business partnerships, to begin "Coffee with the Principal," to start "Student Forums," to begin a staff/student advocacy program, to implement a "Reading Buddies" program, and to significantly increase the number of volunteer hours that our community donates to our school and its efforts to reach and to assist every student.

During the 2007 - 2008 school year, our staff noticed that we had quite a significant number of students who were desperately in need of a positive role model and adult advocate. This was due to the fact that we had a number of students who were struggling in some area or areas of their lives, such as academically, socially, emotionally, at home, etc. Therefore, we collected the names of these students, and then staff members signed up to become an "advocate" for one or more of these students. Our advocates were to assist their students in the following ways: counsel them, eat lunch with them, check on their home life, check on their academic performance periodically with their teachers, check on their behavior, etc. Our staff advocates met frequently with their students to chat and to build positive personal relationships. We wanted each child to realize that they are important and that someone truly cares for and about them. This staff/student advocacy program was never fully implemented. This was due to staff constraints. The staff largely focused on building these positive relationships with the students in their respective classrooms.

No new action plans were implemented in this priority during the 2007 - 2008 school year. We also made no mid-year corrections during the school year.

F. 21st Century Systems

Using school surveys as an indicator, our major initiative in this arena during the past school year was to implement strategies that will make our students feel safe and secure while at school. According to student survey results, 87% of our students indicated that they felt safe while at school. This placed our school in last place amongst the elementary schools in our district. At the three other elementary schools, over 90% of their students said that they felt safe while at school. This must change!

After having disaggregated the "hard data" during the 2007 - 2008 school year, as a staff, we decided what we needed to implement in order to combat this relatively "unsafe impression!" Mrs. Snow, our guidance counselor, began our peer mediation/conflict resolution program at

TC. One component of this program was to teach a cadre of respected students how to effectively mediate student conflicts. These mediators were then empowered to carry out their tasks, by conducting conflict resolution counseling sessions with student combatants. In addition, a school committee created school wide rules and expectations. Along with the rules, came consequences, both positive and punitive. All of this was thoroughly explained to the students by our certified staff. Our school also implemented a school-wide "marble incentives" program, that was aimed at "catching students doing the right thing," and rewarding them for their behavior.

During the 2007 - 2008 school year, we also continued to conduct fire drills and lockdown procedures. In addition, we held a variety of safety-related student courses, such as "Stranger Danger," fire safety, gun safety, bicycle safety, etc.

Due to the infancy of these programs, we do not feel that we can appropriately evaluate the needs for additional steps at this time. In addition, as a result, we have yet to make any adjustments, pending the availability of additional pertinent data.

II. Summary of Results

A. Globally-Competitive Students

T.C. Henderson demonstrated “High Growth” as a school this year in the area of Mathematics. In fact, based on the latest EOG test scores, 71% of our students met A.C (Academic Change)! Academic Change refers to the amount of academic progress that a student must make during one school year in order to have shown one year's worth of growth for one year's worth of schooling, as defined by North Carolina's ABCs program. In addition, each of the sub-groups at TC made AYP! Thus, even though our overall mathematics proficiency rate of students scoring at Level III and/or IV fell from 84% to 75%, we still met all AYP and “High Growth” benchmarks! However, we did fall short of our goal of reaching a proficiency rate of 95%. Also, our school’s trend in overall proficiency rates continues to fall, as it has for the past eight school years!

In terms of a breakdown by grade level, in the area of mathematics, our 4th grade students’ proficiency rate fell from 84.6% in 2006 – 2007 to 73.0% in 2007 – 2008. Our fifth graders declined slightly from 81.8% to 81.4%, and our third graders improved their proficiency rates from 66.7% to 71.90%! Therefore, much work remains to be accomplished in this academic area.

As a result of our school's safety net plan, which dictated that we were to develop student writing portfolios, 100% of our students now have their own portfolios. Also, during the 2007 - 2008 school year, 33% of our students conducted their own student-led digital portfolio parent conferences. In fact, 66% of our second graders led their own conferences during the 2007 - 2008 school year, which was the highest percentage of any of our grade levels.

In terms of our student mentoring program, we were able to place (26) of our students with their own volunteer mentor, out of a total need of (45) students. This was a 58% placement rate for the 2007 - 2008 school year. On average, students who worked with a mentor, grew their math EOG test scores by seven (7) points more than their non-mentored peers. These volunteer mentors donated 1,800 hours to our school's mentor program during the 2007 - 2008 school year.

B. 21st Century Professionals

As a result of the goal in our current School Improvement Plan which states that “Every certified staff member will participate in, and complete, at least one CEU of High Quality staff development annually,” we really emphasized staff development and follow-up coaching during the 2007 – 2008 school year.

Thus, 95% of our teachers received extensive training on student digital portfolios and student-led conferencing during the winter of 2008. This High Quality staff development was highly successful, as evidenced by the fact that 33% of our students in grades 2 – 5 conducted their own student-led digital portfolio conferences with their parents prior to the end of the 2007 - 2008 school year.

100% of our staff was also trained on the proper use of Math Renaissance. During the first quarter, of 2007 – 2008 an average of 79 tests were taken per classroom, and by the third quarter, that average number had risen to 133 tests per classroom. This was a direct result of our staff training.

In 2007 – 2008, K – 5th graders earned 3,671.2 Accelerated Reader points. There was a large discrepancy in acquired Accelerated Reader points among grade levels. The average percent correct for the first quarter was 81.6% school wide, and in the fourth quarter, it had dropped to 78.3% school wide. According to Accelerated Reader, we had 51.8% of our students identified as at-risk at the end of the first quarter, and by the fourth quarter, that percentage had risen to 56.4%! 100% of our certified staff members have been trained on the proper utilization of Accelerated Reader.

Five (5) teachers who received their LCD projectors during the 2007 – 2008 school year also received projector training during the year. This amounted to 33% of our total certified staff.

Thus, we exceeded the goal of providing every certified staff member with at least one CEU of High Quality staff development during the 2007 - 2008 school year. In fact, 20% of our certified staff members earned 3.0 CEU's of High Quality Professional Development during the 2007 - 2008 school year.

C. Healthy and Responsible Students

Our goal was to increase the percentage of our students who meet or surpassed the standards for the Presidential Physical Fitness Awards. In the fall of 2007, .007% of our students scored in the top 15% of students nationwide according to the national standards, and 11% of our students scored in the top 50%. By the spring of 2008, our students' fitness scores had increased to 18% in the top 15% range and 31% in the top 50% range! Thus, we have already met and exceeded our goal of having 15% of our student body to qualify for Presidential Physical Fitness!

Our scores reflect that our students are achieving above the national averages based on our fitness components. Students will continue to be assessed three times per year in the five component areas of the Challenge Fitness Test, while individual and group data will be collected and tracked to evaluate our needs on both individual and school levels.

The BMI tracking of our students also provided some positive results. Based on the fall, 2007 data, TC Henderson had 25% of students at the 95th percentile, and 47% at/above the 85th percentile. By the spring of 2008, our scores reflected a decrease in BMI to 19% at the 95th percentile and 35% at/above the 85th percentile. Compared to the other elementary schools in our county, we showed the most improvement in decreasing students' BMIs.

During the 2007 - 2008 school year, the before school intramural program was enjoyed by approximately (50) students. So for this year, we have (65) students participating in these activities at least two mornings per week. This represents nearly a 35% increase in the number of students who are participating in our Intramurals program.

Through the efforts of the Eblen Foundation, 100% of our students were given healthy snacks during the school day last year.

D. Leadership

Our goal for volunteer hours for TC Henderson for 2007 – 2008 was 2,420 hours, which would have been a 10% increase over the total for 2006 – 2007. We actually accrued 3,200 total volunteer hours for 2007 – 2008! In addition to these volunteer hours, our students also benefited from just over 1800 volunteer hours that were donated through our school-wide mentoring program.

Therefore, our volunteer hours increased to in excess of 5,000 hours during the 2007 - 2008 school year. This represents nearly a 120% increase over volunteer hours donated during the 2006 - 2007 school year.

We continue to actively seek partnerships with our businesses and civic organizations to support our school programs. We increased the number of business partners from seven during the 2006 - 2007 school year to eleven during the 2007 - 2008 school year, which represents over a 10% increase in the number of business partnerships. We also had (76) businesses who donated items and/or funds to our annual May Day Festival.

The principal and community members met four times during the school year with an average of twelve parents per meeting, for "Coffee with the Principal." This was the first year of implementation, so we look to improve participation during the 2008 - 2009 school year, by changing meeting times, meeting dates, and increasing communication about the upcoming "Coffees." Parent surveys indicate that 88% of families feel comfortable talking with the principal.

Four "Coffee with Principal" sessions were held during the 2007 - 2008 school year, with each averaging about 12 parents attending per session.

The principal implemented and conducted six "Student Forum" sessions during the 2007 - 2008 school year. Each forum was attended by 10 students on average.

The "Reading Buddies" Program was implemented in every classroom for the 2007 - 2008 school year. This positively affected approximately 180 students. Thus, 100% of our student population was impacted and involved in this initiative.

E. 21st Century Systems

According to the 2007 - 2008 student survey results, 87% of our students indicated that they felt safe while at school. This placed TC Henderson in last place amongst the four elementary schools. In fact during the past five years, TC has always been rated by its students as the least safe of the four elementary schools in Transylvania County

In order to combat this perception, we have trained 20 students to become conflict mediators and they conducted approximately (50) conflict resolution sessions with students during the 2007 - 2008 school year. We also conducted 10 fire drills and four lockdowns during the 2007 - 2008 school year. We also conducted (3) tornado drills during the 2007 - 2008 school year. Officer Thomas, our SRO, conducted 9 sessions of the following lessons to each of our 9 classrooms during the 2007 - 2008 school year: gun safety, fire safety, stranger danger, bus safety, etc.

However, our number of Out-Of-School Suspensions during the 2007 - 2008 school year increased to eight incidents, where there were zero OSS incidents during the 2006 - 2007 school year. Our In-School Suspension incidents during the 2007 - 2008 school year also increased to (33), from (9) during the 2006 - 2007 school year.

III. Reflections and Lessons Learned

School Improvement efforts were effective during the 2007 – 2008 school year. A consistent need is to focus efforts to increase our proficiency rate in the area of mathematics. In addition, we desperately need to reverse our downward trend in terms of EOG test scores. As a school, for the past six years, our EOG test scores have dropped a bit each year, in terms of proficiency scores. This is not acceptable under any circumstances. As a result of this consistent decline, this past year, our school was labeled as a “School of Progress,” meaning that between 70 – 79.9% of our students were scoring at or above grade level in mathematics at the end of the 2007 – 2008 school year. During the 2002 – 2003 school year, our overall proficiency rate was 95.5%, compared to the proficiency rate of 75% this past school year!

Even though our overall proficiency rate has dropped dramatically over the past few years, our school has made or exceeded AYP standards and made High Growth each school year since the implementation of the NC ABC Program!

Overall in 4th grade writing, our percent proficient has increased from 48.1% in 2003 – 2004 to approximately 57.7% in 2007 – 2008. This represents real progress, but much remains to be accomplished. Even with this increase in writing proficiency, our school continues to score below the other three elementary schools in our system.

Based upon the latest set of data, the following items increased/decreased/improved during the 2007 – 2008 school year over previous years: decrease in bus referrals, increase in writing scores, increase in math scores in grades 3 & 5, increase in volunteer hours, increase in the number of business partnerships, increase in the number of mentors volunteering at school, increased use of Math and Reading Renaissance Program, increase in the number of staff/student advocacy relationships, increased offering of High Quality staff development workshops, increased number of student awards and recognitions, an increase in the number of students involved in after school academic coaching, implementation of student-led parent conferences, increased emphasis in physical fitness, decreased student BMIs, increased emphasis in healthy snacks, expanded before school intramurals program, implementation of “Reading Buddies” program, implementation of “Coffee with the Principal,” began Student Forum, began Peer Mediation Program, and implementation of school-wide rules.

Due to the fact that our proficiency rates continue their downward trend, we need to continue our efforts in understanding growth vs. proficiency rates amongst staff. Areas of performance that need to be improved are clearly outlined when the data is analyzed. Data analysis and assessment should help to direct our staff to meet the goals outlined in the Standard Course of Study and in our School Improvement Plan.

IV. Next Steps

The school will continue to focus our efforts on reversing our downward trend in terms of proficiency rates on EOG testing. As a result, the structure of our Academic Tutoring Program and our Mentoring Program will be continually examined to make certain that we are meeting individual needs. We have already begun accomplishing this by writing student PEPs and expanding our Academic Coaching both during and after school. We are also working diligently to expand our differentiation of instruction, utilization of leveled small groups, establishing flexible skilled groups, and the creation of more inter- and multi-disciplinary units.

Our staff development activities for this school year will support our efforts to increase proficiency levels, to continue High Growth amongst our students, to differentiate instruction, to meet the needs of our varied learning styles, to increase hands-on activities, and to expand our critical thinking, problem-solving activities. As a result, we will be conducting a book study, on Marzano's book, "Effective Instructional Practices," which highlights research-proven best practices.

With the delay in the reading scores until November, we will then have to make adjustments to our academic coaching and interventions time to make certain that we are adequately addressing the needs of our students. Differentiation and academic rigor will become key issues for all stakeholders in order for TC Henderson to once gain become a "School of Excellence," as defined by the ABCs. Regular grade level meetings and implementation of peer CWTs are two ways we plan to focus our efforts on improving our proficiency rates, through improved classroom instruction and learning activities. Collaborative planning will also be implemented in our efforts to enhance the quality of instruction and learning. Additional information from future benchmark assessments will provide specific objectives where students are struggling.

Some additional strategies will be implemented/expanded/fine tuned during this current school year. They include: Vertical Articulation meetings, "Eat Smart, Move More" initiative, Energizer activities, Ultra Keys, a school-wide writing plan, curriculum mapping, grade level planning times, interdisciplinary units, technology-based educational software, school-wide discipline plan, anti-bullying plan, school-wide math and reading plans, Good News postcards, peer tutoring, reading buddies, and other "Research-Based Best Practices."

The principal is sending monthly newsletters to all parents informing them of various activities and issues as well as progress toward school improvement goals. These initiatives are also being communicated through teacher newsletters, class web pages, the principal's web page, and the school's web page. An increased focus on the personalized education plan (PEP) will become a critical tool for building relationships with parents of students who have not met state and local standards.

At this time, we will not be amending any goals or objectives for the 2008 - 2009 school year. However, we are implementing, eliminating, and expanding certain initiatives and strategies that we believe will assist us as a school in meeting our school improvement goals. Most of these initiatives have been communicated at some point in this summary documentation.

We have elected staff members and parent membership for this school year in order to have the new team in place in time to complete this summary and to help move our school forward in the future. We are very excited about the future possibilities of our school!