



S u p e r i n t e n d e n t M e m o r a n d u m

To: Board of Education Members
From: David G. Title
Date: June 7, 2016
Re: 2015-2016 District-Wide Improvement Initiatives Update

I am pleased to present our progress on the District-Wide Improvement Initiatives for 2015-2016. This aggressive effort included a total of 35 Initiatives, 29 of which represented Specific Actions listed in the five-year District Improvement Plan. There are 63 Specific Actions to be completed in the five years of the District Improvement Plan, some of which are designed to take multiple years to fully implement.

On the enclosed report, I categorize the progress for each Initiative as “Complete” or “In Progress.” Of the 35 Initiatives, 25 are “Complete” and 10 are “In Progress.” The summary by Core Strategy is as follows:

Instructional Program (10)

Complete – 5
In Progress – 5

Teams/Improvement Plans (5)

Complete – 5

Leadership Capacity (4)

Complete – 4

Resources (16)

Complete – 11
In Progress – 5

Initiatives that are “In Progress” will be carried over for completion and listed in the Initiatives for 2016-2017 (for example, see #31). If a multiple-year Initiative is listed as “Complete” it will be carried over as a 2016-2017 Initiative for the second year of implementation (for example, see #1). If a single-year Initiative is listed as “Complete,” it will be removed from the list of Initiatives for 2016-2017 and will be treated as an ongoing part of district operations (for example, see #11). The administrative team will identify additional Initiatives from the District Improvement Plan that will result in an updated District-Wide Initiatives list for 2016-2017.

DGT/mb



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Instructional Program

1. Develop a World Language Program at the elementary school level that reflects the best research-based practices in the field. (Year 1 of 2)

We developed implementation guides and common assessments and put them in place this year for grades 4 and 5. The approved 2016-2017 budget enables us to begin Spanish in Grade 3, with the plan to add grades K-2 in 2017-2018. In June 2016, implementation guides will be modified to address the addition of Spanish instruction in grade 3 and to include lessons learned from the full implementation of the grade 6 program in 15-16.

Status: Year 1 Complete

2. Develop and approve curriculum in Social Studies K-12 and Computer Literacy Grades 6-8. * (Year 1 of 5)

The Board of Education approved the revised PK-12 Social Studies curriculum, along with new textbooks in grades 6-12. The curriculum will be implemented in grades 6-12 in 2016-17 and in grades PK-5 in 2017-18. The Board of Education approved the revised Computer Literacy curriculum and it will be implemented in the 2016-2017 school year.

Status: Year 1 Complete

3. Research and review the K-12 Science Program sequence of courses to align with the new generation science standards. (Year 1 of 5)

This process was started and will be completed this summer. A recommended course sequence for the high schools will be made before the Program of Studies goes to print in January 2017. The curriculum will be presented to the Board in May 2017.

The CT State Department of Education has just recently suggested an order of sequencing of science content for the Next Generation Science Standards in time for the summer curriculum writing. The largest issue for us is whether Earth Science will be a required grade 9 course for all students.

Status: In Progress

4. Implement newly adopted curriculum in World Language and Library/Media K-12. (Year 1 of 5)

Implementation guides and common assessments were developed and used in elementary World Languages. The elementary Library/Media curriculum was partially implemented due to the challenges of connecting that curriculum to classroom practices. The primary issue was a lack of time for co-planning. This is being addressed through co-development of curriculum among English Language Arts, Social Studies, and Library Media in June, 2016.



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We did implement the revised World Language and Library Media curriculum in all schools and classrooms in grades 6 through 12. The Library Media curriculum continues to be included as we work on Social Studies implementation, and as we develop the Capstone project.

Additionally, in conjunction with the Technology Department, the Library Media Specialists are working to transition sections of the Library Media Center to Makers' Spaces. Some elementary libraries have activities in place for students to explore STEM concepts.

Status: In Progress

5. Develop a comprehensive transition program from grade 5 to grade 6, and from grade 8 to grade 9 to increase student success at grades 6 and 9.

This year we focused on Instructional Rounds in academic content areas (English, Math and World Language) across levels. Through this process we identified the issue of expectations for student performance as a need to be addressed. Next year we will expand Instructional Rounds to include Social Studies as we implement a new curriculum.

We also established specific guidelines for special education transitions -- the annual and transition PPT process. We developed a transition process for all student/families transitioning from 5-6, 8-9, and 12 to the Community Partnership Program (CPP). The planning process engaged students, families, school staff and administration in planning for positive transitions and ensuring programmatic implementation on day one. In the fall we will assess outcomes and reflect on feedback to adjust for transitions in the 2016-17 school year. We will also address the Early Childhood Center (ECC) transition process and the graduation transition process in the 2016-17 school year.

We will also involve the middle and high schools in focused discussions around grading, which started this year. We will include the middle schools in a discussion about preparation for the Capstone. The summer reading for teachers and administrators will include *Personal Learning*, by Alison Zmuda, whom we hope to hire next year to work with our administrative teams.

Status: In Progress

6. Develop and implement high school performance tasks in grades 9 and 10, linked to a Capstone Experience, and assess student performance using the academic expectations rubrics. (Year 1 of 3)

The goal of the secondary curriculum departments is to implement performance-based assessments in the required courses for the four major academic areas in grades 9 and 10. We completed an initial field test of the Academic Expectations rubric. Performance tasks for grades 9 and 10 using a common template will be finalized for all content areas except science before the fall of 2016. Due to the revised science curriculum, we need an additional year to align those tasks to the proposed curriculum.



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A Capstone committee is working on defining the elements of a Capstone project and developing an implementation plan that supports Capstone preparation for younger students. A recommendation will be presented to district leadership in the fall.

Status: In Progress

7. Revise and implement additional common assessments aligned to the curriculum in grades K through 12, including performance-based assessments. (Year 1 of 3 and Year 1 of 4)

We have identified expectations for the common elements of strong performance assessments and a schedule of initial performance assessment placement. We will align performance assessments to the Fairfield Public Schools' Academic Expectations. The PK-12 curriculum leaders are working on a standard template with common elements for grades PK-12. We will revise Social Studies tasks to align to new curriculum.

Status: In Progress

8. Implement Professional Learning to strengthen instructional practices for students with disabilities and ELL students.

Professional development activities in the special education department included: Cadre #1 of our research-based reading intervention began its work. This work will result in 35 teachers earning certification in structured literacy teaching by the end of the 2016-17 school year. Cadre #2 will begin in the fall with an additional 35 teachers. School psychologists and social workers were focused on improving our comprehensive evaluations and increasing district capacity to work with and provide interventions to students with anxiety in our schools. We will continue to provide these professional learning opportunities in 2016-17.

ELL teachers were provided more professional learning opportunities. Their training and outcomes are being aligned to the English Language Arts curriculum.

Status: Complete

9. Implement Professional Learning on "Teaching in the Block" to all high school teachers. (Year 1 of 3)

Both high schools have used their faculty meetings and building-based professional development days to focus on instructional strategies in the block schedule. The workshops have been facilitated by teachers who have experienced success in using a particular strategy or practice in the new schedule. Our Technology Integration Specialist has been extremely helpful in sharing the use of Google docs and other technologies, such as the flipped classroom, to advance this work.

Status: Complete



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10. Develop a middle school advisory program.

A middle school advisory program will be in place next year, with a modified schedule on advisory days. The middle school administrators will use the program that is available through Naviance until the district's social-emotional framework is completed and a new curriculum is developed.

Status: Complete

Teams/Improvement Plans

11. All School and Department Improvement Plans will align with the District Improvement Plan.

This has been completed at all levels. Schools are starting the work to compare year-end data to one-year targets so that targets can be re-set for next year. In the most recent PK-12 District Leadership Team meeting, schools shared leadership strategies that were effective in advancing the school improvement work. This work will continue on an annual basis.

Status: Complete

12. Use vertical teams to conduct Instructional Rounds in Math, Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, and World Language.

We successfully conducted Instructional Rounds in Math, Language Arts, and World Languages that involved observation of instruction at elementary, middle and high school classrooms.

Status: Complete

13. Continue to improve the effectiveness of Data Teams at the School, Grade, Department and District levels to enhance student learning. (Year 1 of 2)

The District Data Team met on a monthly basis this year to review district-wide results in SBAC Mathematics and English/Language Arts. It also reviewed results related to several other student performance indicators in the District Improvement Plan.

Data teams are in place at all schools. We will establish a small group of staff from each school next year to work with the Information Technology Department to learn about the use of the data visualization tab on Infinite Campus to support Data Team work.

The high schools, including Walter Fitzgerald Campus (WFC), are starting to use the Tableau reports created by the Tech Department. This allows review of student data, enabling School Improvement Team discussion regarding the meaning of the data in terms of progress and the work still required.

Status: Year 1 Complete



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14. Use best-practice models to improve the alternative high school program to engage every student in a challenging and rigorous program. (Year 1 of 2)

WFC is using project-based learning to help develop student interest and engagement in learning. Student presentations have resulted in a new enthusiasm around learning. The behaviors have improved and students are more involved in the school. There is still a great deal of work to be done, but the work at WFC will certainly benefit from the investigation of personalized learning and the work of Alison Zmuda.

We have received inquiries from other school districts about the possibility of paying substantial tuition dollars to send students to this program. We believe that, if the Board of Education granted approval, that we could attract as many as five out-of-district students to this program, resulting in substantial revenue that could be used to offset the loss of state ECS money this year and in future years.

Status: Year 1 Complete

15. All schools will engage in Instructional Rounds at least twice per year as part of the School Improvement Plan implementation.

Elementary schools, including ECC, conducted Instructional Rounds in their schools. Some elementary Rounds involved only staff at one school; in other cases, it involved staff members from multiple schools. At the secondary level, some schools did not conduct their own Rounds but participated in the department-led Rounds. The high schools had several Rounds occurring in their departments, some led by curriculum leaders and coordinators, and others conducted entirely by teachers. They also participated in vertical Rounds across the middle and high schools in World Language, Language Arts, Math and Special Education.

Status: Complete

Leadership Capacity

16. Strengthen teacher leadership capacity related to the School Improvement Process (Instructional Rounds, Data Teams, Marzano learning strategies). (Year 1 of 2)

Teachers have been an integral part of the leadership through their work in existing district processes and protocols. They have been provided professional learning to support their role as facilitators of Instructional Rounds and they serve on and lead school-based data teams.

Dr. Title trained an additional 25 teachers as Instructional Rounds facilitators. In May 2016, these teacher leaders also met with Dr. Title as a group to review their successes and areas for growth in Instructional Rounds facilitation.



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Teacher leadership also continues to grow with participation in influential committees such as the Capstone. As noted, teachers are leading most of the professional development for other teachers in teaching in the block schedule. The teacher leader for psychologists led his fellow psychologists and social workers in improving our crisis intervention teams and other responsibilities of their positions. Teachers are also taking on leadership roles as the first cadre of individuals trained in the new dyslexia mandate work.

Our Technology Integration Specialist for the high schools is an excellent example of teacher leadership. She excels in her position and has expanded the effective use of technology across the high schools, including WFC. She has been instrumental in supporting teachers as they explore new techniques/strategies and the use of technology to more effectively use the time in the block schedule.

In addition to teacher leadership development, all administrators went through a calibration process regarding the Marzano learning strategies, as required by the Fairfield Educator Professional Growth Plan, in August 2015. Additionally, administrators participated in professional learning regarding the strategies at a District Leadership Team meeting in the fall of 2015.

Status: Year 1 Complete

17. Align teacher goals in the Teacher Professional Growth Plan to goals in the School Improvement Plan and/or Department Improvement Plan. (Year 1 of 2)

All teacher goals are aligned to the School Improvement Plans. School Improvement Plans are aligned to the Department and District Improvement Plans.

Status: Complete

18. Ensure that all 6 new administrators have a successful first year in Fairfield.

All new administrators have been supported, both by request of the administrator and through reaching out by the Director of Human Resources and other members of the central office leadership team. All of our new leaders have proven to be effective and successful in their roles during the 2015-16 school year.

Status: Complete

19. Implement Leadership Academy Module #1: Leadership Capacity Special Education Processes and Practices.

We completed Module #1 of our Leadership Academy. The focus of Module #1 was Special Education. The Director of Special Education and Special Programs conducted four sessions with



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secondary administrators and four sessions with elementary administrators that explored leadership in the following areas: setting up a culture of collaboration, addressing individual needs, working with families and outside providers, using conflict resolution, and ensuring staff accountability.

Status: Complete

Resources

20. Implement a research-based common protocol to select the most qualified applicant for vacant positions.

A committee comprising central office, district-wide and building administrators convened in February and March of 2016 to develop the Educator Hiring Protocol. The protocol was presented to the district administrators at a District Leadership Team meeting in April 2016. All resources have been developed and distributed to administrators. The new protocol will be used in this year's hiring process for all teachers and administrators.

Status: Complete

21. Develop and implement a New Teacher Academy to build capacity of all non-tenured teachers. (Year 1 of 2)

A survey of administrators and first-year and second-year teachers was conducted in October 2015 to assess successes of current teacher induction and needs going forward. A team of district administrators and teachers convened in May to develop the structure of the New Teacher Academy. Implementation will begin in August 2016 and continue throughout the 2016-17 school year.

Status: Year 1 Complete

22. Implement common planning time for high school teachers.

Most departments have been able to take advantage of common planning time at both high schools. Although the entire department may not have the same scheduled planning time, most teachers have common planning time with their colleagues.

Status: Complete

23. Implement specific components of the technology plan regarding classroom technology equipment and instructional software and applications which support student learning PK – 12. (Year 1 of 3)

All classrooms across the district are now supplied with either a SMARTBoard or a projection system. With the support of our high school Technology Integration Specialist, an online application for software and computer applications has been developed. This application tracks all software and apps for teachers so they can explore what we already have before asking for something else. It has also made teachers much more aware of licensing practices associated with software and applications. The progress in the use of



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effective digital applications at the high school level has been astounding and continues to move the district toward a one-to-one computing district.

Status: Year 1 Complete

24. Develop and implement on-line training modules to support the professional growth and needs of staff. (Year 1 of 3)

Currently, we have a consultant from Pfizer that is developing four different on-line modules for our science teachers free of cost.

Status: Year 1 Complete

25. Expand options for mental health support for students in grades 9-12. (Year 1 of 2)

We have expanded the options for supporting students with mental health needs at the high schools and the WFC. As a result, we have been able to return four students to district and will return at least seven more for the 2016-17 school year. Additionally, we have seen a significant reduction in the number of students leaving the district for out-of-district placements. To date, we have placed two students out this year at the high school level. We remain very optimistic about our results as student attendance is improving, grades and data regarding achievement are improving and students and families report positive growth and support of the program. Next steps include discussion of middle school level improvements and the enhancement of prevention efforts through teaching models like DBT (dialectical behavioral therapy). This is currently in the research phase.

Status: Year 1 Complete

26. Train teachers and implement evidence-based reading program for struggling readers (dyslexia) for students in grades K-5. Implement evidence-based reading program for students in grades 6-12. (Year 1 of 2)

In regular education a phonemic awareness screen was put in place. This identified a need for teacher professional learning for classroom teachers to improve instruction in word work. Additionally, materials were purchased to support instruction in all classrooms. This work will continue in 2016-17. Also, see the work done on #8 related to dyslexia.

The reading program *Language! Live* is currently in year two of implementation in the high school Reading Strategies classes. This program focuses on word training and reading comprehension. Teachers participated in an 8-hour professional development session led by *Language! Live* trainers. In the Reading classes in grades 6-8, teachers continue to use the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System to assess student reading ability and to design evidenced-based reading support. Professional learning



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resources were identified and purchased for grades 6-8 and plans for coaching using these materials are in place. This work will continue in 2016-17.

Status: Year 1 Complete

27. Expand the use of Infinite Campus across all schools to improve communication and efficiency, including the use of Grade Book at the elementary schools.

We are in the midst of training the elementary Instructional Improvement Teachers in leading the use of Infinite Campus in their schools. This training has included using Messenger and Tableau to increase communication. In addition we are working to develop an implementation model linking district assessments and unit plans to Progress Report standards. We are refining those standards to reduce their number and make them more understandable to parents.

Status: In Progress

28. Implement electronic applications to increase efficiency (HR functions, field trip approval, Preventative Maintenance, increased electronic communication, bus disciplinary referrals).

The Human Resources Department opened up Employee Self Service (ESS) to all employees in March 2016. "Pay stub" information is now available in the ESS application and is no longer distributed in paper copy.

In the Maintenance Department, we have implemented the module in our existing "SchoolDude" system that encompasses preventative maintenance for HVAC, Controls Integration, and Roofs. Low Voltage, Emergency Generators, and Boilers are planned for 2016-2017 and will complete the electronic conversion of our preventative maintenance programs.

Student records are now mostly maintained in IC. Minimal paper reports are retained in the 50-year retention paper files. Many routing teacher forms have been converted to digital documents and completed online. The use of the website to communicate has eliminated the need for a host of documents to be sent to parents, including health requirements, report cards, registration documents, etc. The revised BOE Policies will now be housed on the website as a result of the CABA audit, and there will no longer be paper binders, alleviating not only paper, but hours of staff time in sending out the paper updates.

Status: In Progress

29. Implement and communicate a School Safety and Security Improvement Plan that complies with all state requirements in conjunction with the Fairfield Police Department and the community.

We completed a new Safety and Security Plan in cooperation with the Fairfield Police and Fire Departments for submission to the Connecticut State Department of Education. The Lockdown Drill



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Manual has been completed and distributed to all staff. This manual resulted from the dialog among the Fairfield Police Department, Fairfield Fire Department, building administrators and key BOE central office personnel. Lt. Eddie Weihe ensured that the manual contained input from all four of these groups.

Status: Complete

30. Explore redistricting options that could mitigate the costs of the Holland Hill and Mill Hill capital projects.

The Board approved its subcommittee's recommendation on the principles to be followed in a redistricting scenario. The Superintendent hired Milone and MacBroom to explore all options for redistricting and the consultants used the Board's principles as the basis for its study. A full presentation was conducted in public on this issue in February, 2016 and the results are posted on the school system's website. The firm identified some conceptual redistricting options. In addition, as a result of this work, the Board received new 10-year enrollment forecasts for the entire district and by school.

Status: Complete

31. Design a Racial Imbalance Plan that satisfies the state requirements. *

The Milone and MacBroom study focused specifically on the options for redistricting to achieve racial balance. No short-term redistricting solution is available; we presented to the State Board of Education on May 4, 2016 and promised to bring forward an amended plan by December 2016. The State Board was appreciative of the seriousness and commitment of the Fairfield BOE on this matter.

Status: In Progress

32. Research strengthening the enforcement of residency requirements.

We developed and implemented registration policies to strengthen the residency investigation process and streamline the flow of requirements. This action identified non-resident families with students in the Fairfield Public Schools, prompting residency investigations.

The registration staff should be commended for its work in the development of policies/practices to better enforce BOE policies on enrollment in districted schools and also on residency checks. We believe that our current staff cannot continue to effectively conduct the investigative work in-house and that an outside firm should be considered to supplement the in-house staff in the 2017-2018 budget.

Status: Complete



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33. Develop and clearly communicate an operating and capital budget, including safety and security infrastructure (Phase II) for 2016-2017 that fully funds state and federal mandates and the District Improvement Plan. *

The capital non-recurring budget, which included Phase II of the Security Infrastructure, was approved by the town bodies with the exception of the central office server room HVAC project. The operating budget, as approved by the Town, fully funds the District Improvement Plan initiatives for 2016-2017, as well as all state and federal mandates. Approximately \$3.5 million was saved by switching health insurance plans to the Connecticut Partnership 2.0. The town's revenue from the State was reduced by approximately \$2.3 million and the BOE has agreed to do its part throughout 2016-2017 to help mitigate this loss.

Status: Complete

34. Accept as completed the Stratfield renovation and addition, Dwight roof, FWHS roof, FWMS renovation and addition projects. *

The Board accepted the completed Stratfield renovation and addition, Dwight roof, and the Fairfield Woods Middle School renovation and addition. The Fairfield Warde High School roof will be completed this summer when the smoke hatch replacements are scheduled; students will not be in the building during this work.

Status: In Progress

35. Finalize Paraprofessionals and SPED Trainers Contracts. *

The Paraprofessional contract was finalized in December 2015. The SPED Trainers contract continues in negotiation. As a side note, the Technology Department voted to de-certify and is no longer part of a bargaining unit.

Status: In Progress