

SCHOOL-BASED PLANNING

Context and Purpose

The Board of Education is committed to a program of reform based upon the beliefs that all children can learn, parents are an integral part of the learning process, and schools have the responsibility to educate students to standards of excellence that will prepare them for higher education, the workplace, and their roles as members of a culturally diverse society. The Board, pursuant to law, has authority over and responsibility for the general management, operation, control, maintenance, discipline, and related educational activities of the schools under its charge and is, therefore, accountable for the quality of the educational program afforded Rochester's children. Consistent with these responsibilities, the Board has undertaken a program of reform that involves four strategies to effect change in the school system and improve the performance of students:

1. encouraging schools to increase their productivity by providing school communities with greater authority and responsibility for decisions that affect student performance (school-based planning);
2. creating the best possible staff for the Rochester schools, as staff committed to urban education that is able to bring students to new standards of performance;
3. establishing goals, standards and measures for student achievement (outcomes); and
4. establishing a system of accountability that focuses the work of the district on preparing students for their roles as employees and citizens in the future.

In setting school-based planning as one of its strategies to achieve reform, the Board expresses its conviction that the design of the organization must respect the primacy of the school's role in initiating and implementing change that will improve the performance of students. Recognizing the school as the essential unit of district productivity and accountability, the Board will provide school staff with latitude and authority over decisions that affect student performance (e.g., selection and assignment of staff, appropriation of allocated resources, curriculum emphasis, design of instruction, placement and grouping of students, use of instructional time), based upon law, policy, contractual agreements, research, and sound educational practice. The type of improvement that the Board seeks is dependent on the energy, capability, and resourcefulness of teachers, administrators, and parents at individual sites, forming active and responsive communities that are committed to the quality of children's education and that occupy a powerful role in shaping school experience.

The Board intends school improvement to proceed in the context of the Board's mission and with an understanding of the purposes of education, expressed as the expectations that the Rochester community holds for district graduates. Greater latitude and authority will be transferred to schools as the district has more evidence that school efforts are directed to improved student performance and are accompanied by parents' and the community's satisfaction with the quality of education provided to children.

In setting forth this policy, it is understood that nothing herein shall alter, amend, supersede, or abrogate provisions of agreements collectively bargained pursuant to the Taylor Law by and between the Board and the unions representing district employees.

Organization

School-based planning is the organizational structure for improving school productivity. This structure provides for the formation of a planning team at each school, consisting of representatives of the full school community who hold primary responsibility for the design of a multi-year school improvement plan. In addition, it allows for the formation of planning teams at sites other than schools and in programs within schools, by consensus of the primary constituencies.

The planning team, chaired by the Building Principal, will assess student performance and school effectiveness, set improvement goals, and design instruction and other services in the context of those goals. The team's work will proceed by consensus - decisions will be made through constituency consensus - and will provide for participation of all constituencies who share interest in the productivity of the school:

1. teachers;
2. administrators;
3. support staff;
4. parents; and
5. students.

In the event that a team is elected that is not representative of the school's grade levels and program offerings, the team shall have the responsibility to take affirmative action steps immediately to correct under-representation. Such steps may include, but shall not be limited to, adding members to the team by consensus, designating seats for representatives of certain groups, and seeking assistance from the School-Based Planning Steering Committee, Human Resources, the Office of Parent and Community Involvement, community groups, and others.

Because the planning team serves as the school's unit of shared governance and accountability, each school will have a fully constituted team functioning throughout the year. Members who are elected shall be encouraged to make a minimum commitment to serve for one year.

Authority and Responsibility

The school planning team is more than advisory in nature. It is a deliberative, decision-making body. The following premises define the parameters within which the planning team functions:

- The planning team is charged with the work of school improvement, empowered to make decisions and shape programs that will strengthen the education provided to students and lead to the highest standards of achievement. The team's work shall be guided by research on school effectiveness and characterized by innovation, restructuring of conventional approaches, and the most effective practice.

- Each school or team with a school (e.g., house, cluster, school-within-a-school) shall negotiate with the district an agreement on baseline data, improvement goals, and improvement strategies, as well as on the additional resources, support and conditions that may be indicated. The negotiated agreement for school improvement shall be a multi-year plan which shall be binding for all parties. The plan will include a commitment to make annual progress reports to the school community.
- Instructional leadership shall emanate from the team as a whole and from its work. While leadership can emanate from anyone on the team, the Principal shall retain both the authority and the responsibility for creating an environment that supports instruction.
- Each member of the team shall serve as an equal partner in the team's deliberations, decisions, and activities. Each member shall approach the work of school improvement with a sense of ownership for all students, and a commitment to all students' success.
- Once an individual agrees to be elected to the planning team, it shall be his/her responsibility to carry out the work of school improvement by participating fully in the team's discussions, deliberations, and activities. Participation in the work of the team is a manifestation of commitment to the welfare of students.
- The planning team is empowered to act on behalf of the school when its decisions and actions are consistent with Board policy, legal mandates, and contractual language (unless waivers are granted), and are supported by a majority of each constituency represented on the team (constituency consensus). Although the authority of the planning team emanates from the collective action of its members, the team as a whole shall have the responsibility to consider and involve individuals and constituencies who will be affected by its decisions, whether or not those individuals are formally represented on the team.
- Since the Board, in setting policy, establishing regulations, and entering into contractual agreements, has delegated certain authority and responsibilities to planning teams, each team must establish, by consensus, specific procedures to resolve any impasses that would prevent it from carrying out its charge and responsibilities. Impasse procedures must be filed with the Office of School Improvement. School-based planning teams shall review their impasse procedures annually, not only to inform newly elected team members, but also to determine if any changes are needed.
- In developing its strategies for improvement, the team shall be accountable for equity in the internal distribution of resources; adopting school policies that reflect professional knowledge; establishing means by which staff can continually gain more knowledge; creating problem-identification and problem-solving processes that continually assess and modify its own practices; and responding to the concerns and ideas of parents, students, and staff.

- Recognizing that the empowerment of the team is highly dependent on the stability, knowledge, and interactive skills of its members, individual schools have the responsibility for providing orientation and ongoing training of members, developing procedures that minimize excessive turnover in membership, and providing all members, particularly parents and students, with district support, and access to information they need to make informed decisions and participate as equal partners.
- As a measure of accountability, all planning team meetings shall be open to members of the school community (except when confidential matters such as personnel are discussed) and members shall be responsible for seeking input from and reporting back to the constituencies that they represent on a regular basis.
- As a microcosm of the school community and as its primary representative body, the school planning team has the responsibility to model and incorporate into its decisions and operation the spirit of reform and values as articulated in Board policy (e.g., Equal Employment Opportunity, Values Policy, Parent Involvement Policy) and represented in other strategic initiatives (e.g., Performance Appraisal Redesign for Teachers; Goals, Outcomes, Measures, and Standards; decentralization; creating and developing the highest caliber staff; shared accountability; fostering of innovation).

Parent Representation

The Board's policy on school-based planning recognizes the essential role that parents play as leaders and partners in our schools and in shared decision-making at each site.

The district recognizes and adopts the state definition of "parent" as defined in section 100.11 of the Regulations of the Commissioner of Education in the document entitled "Information Regarding the Commissioner's Regulation Concerning School-Based Planning and Shared Decision-Making." This section clearly notes that a "parent may not be an employee of the district or of either a teachers' or administrators' bargaining unit."

The following premises will guide the role of parents in school-based planning:

- Parents are involved in all aspects of the decision-making process as equal partners of the school-based planning team.
- Parents are elected to the planning team by parent constituent groups in their schools; in cases where there is no organized parent group in a school, the school administration shall work with the District Parent Council and the Parent and Community Involvement office to assist the school by establishing a parent driven process to elect school parent representatives.
- Parent representatives shall be responsible for communicating with their constituents and for representing parent opinions on the planning team.

- Parents will work with school leadership to ensure that sufficient support is given to facilitate parent-to-parent communication regarding matters discussed and agreed to by the planning team.

Focus of Planning

The essential role and responsibility of the school planning team is to decide how to educate the school's students. The team must accept responsibility to lead and influence others in the school community in a way that creates ownership, collaboration and support for the school's mission, visions and goals. Team actions should unite the team in its efforts to improve student achievement.

The school improvement plan shall provide the strategic, long-range direction for schools, consistent with the district's Mission, Vision and Goals.

Each school will develop a school plan that includes the following:

- A statement of the school vision that provides an inspiring image of what the school wants to be in the future.
- Needs/Assessment that includes an analysis of the current state of the school relative to where it wants to go. The analysis is data driven.
- School Improvement Goals in the following areas:
 - Standards and Assessment
 - Develop world class standards of performance for all students and alternative forms of student performance assessments.
 - Learning Environments
 - Create a new paradigm in teaching and learning by connecting schools/classrooms to the curriculum and instructional resources, information technologies and school-to-work transition systems they need to perform to high standards.
 - Integrate the principles of special education inclusion, multiculturalism and values education into the school's organization and work.
 - Community Services and Support
 - Develop opportunities for neighborhood and community organizations to provide support and assistance to students and the school.

- High-Performance Organization

Use “quality” principles and tools (adapted for education) to enhance the effectiveness of the school improvement process and establish a staff development plan linked to improving student performance and achieving the goals of the school.

- Communications and Public Engagement

Initiate/Support continued outreach to parents and the community in a way that will build public confidence and result in sustained parent and community involvement and support for our work.

- Measures of student and school performance including, but not limited to, district-specified performance measures.
- Improvement strategies to achieve progress toward goals and performance measures.
- Annual improvement targets consistent with agreed upon accountability measures.
- Person(s) responsible for leadership and timeframes for implementation.

The focus of the team’s work will be directed toward instruction, curriculum and support for students’ learning rather than routine school operations. The team is charged to initiate change in the ethos and structure of the school, to invigorate the school and ensure its highest productivity.

Accountability

Our system of accountability is shared accountability in which expectations and standards are clearly defined; assessments are credible, measure true progress and provide information to improve practice; triggers of support, assistance and intervention are defined; and incentives to improve practice exist for individual educators (teachers, administrators, support staff), groups of educators (schools, school-within-schools, primary unit, intermediate unit, houses, etc.) and others (parents, community, human service agencies, governmental institutions and businesses).

Further, the district and collective bargaining units recognize that schools or groups of educators within schools (schools-within-schools, primary unit or intermediate unit) are the essential unit of accountability and that student achievement is the essential indicator of progress.

Our commitment is to establish an accountability plan based upon four key principles:

1. Student outcomes are the primary indicator of progress. Student growth and ability to meet learning standards will serve as the fundamental measure of school or school unit accountability.
2. Annual assessment of progress, including public reporting by each school or school unit, will occur.
3. Evidence of how school results have led to changes in the school's improvement plan must be reported annually.
4. Incentives, including resources (e.g., a \$1 million Classroom Resource Fund) to support effective practice and promising directions will be tied to school or school unit progress.

I. STUDENT OUTCOMES AND ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS

The annual progress reporting on all aspects of school performance shall include, but not be limited to, the following achievement measures and measures of school quality:

- Measures in language arts and math (primary and intermediate levels) to be combined, including developmental stages in reading and math.
- Percent of students expected to perform at the next grade level without additional support.
- Progress/Growth of cohort groups over a 2-3 year period: primary, K-2/3; intermediate, 3-5/4-6; middle, 6-8; and high school, 9-12.
- Feedback from receiving school.
- Percent of students who take and, where applicable, pass district, Regents, and national exams, including but not limited to SAT/ACT and other authentic measures of student performance, e.g., New York State proposed Unitary Regents Examination.
- Portfolios with evidence of strong accomplishments in writing.

In addition to student achievement measures, the Board recognizes the importance of indicators of school quality that must be included in an assessment of progress. Such school quality indicators will include but not be limited to:

- Parent involvement, including evidence of direct parent impact on the educational process and evidence of staff connection/outreach to the parent/home.
- Customer satisfaction, including evidence of satisfaction with the quality of the educational experience, school environment and

school/staff levels of responsiveness.

II. LINKING RESULTS TO THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The annual public reporting by each school or school unit will describe how the school's results have led to changes in the school's improvement plan.

III. INCENTIVES LINKED TO SCHOOL OR SCHOOL UNIT PROGRESS

Schools or schools-within-schools demonstrating progress will receive greater autonomy, flexibility, recognition and discretion in the use of resources.

For Teachers:

Distribution of the \$1 million Classroom Resource Fund shall be linked to student progress on agreed-upon achievement measures and other school quality indicators.

For Administrators:

A proportionate (per administrator) amount of the funds (total amount not to exceed \$85,000) will be made available to the Building Principal, Program Principal, Teaching Principal, or other structure resulting from Article 35.

Logical consequences must exist for schools or schools-within-schools that are unable to demonstrate progress toward agreed upon standards. The quality review and assessment of progress will identify barriers that must be addressed. A plan for corrective action may include a combination of any of the following:

- necessary support and assistance
- changes in procedures, staff and/or school operations
- prescribed training
- replacement or reconstituting of the school program or a portion thereof
- school closing

Policy Monitoring and Evaluation

The Superintendent has the responsibility to review the effectiveness of this policy with the Board of Education. This policy will be reviewed every two years. An evaluation of the policy's effectiveness will take place in the Spring of every odd-numbered year. A steering committee comprised of the various school-based planning constituencies and the Superintendent of Schools shall function as a decision-making body empowered to make adjustments, changes and modifications in school-based planning practice, procedure, and regulation consistent with this

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policy and contractual agreements. The steering committee's work shall proceed by constituency consensus. As such adjustments, changes and modifications are made, they shall be put in writing and communicated to school-based planning teams.

An amended or recertified plan together with a statement of the plan's success in achieving its objectives, shall be submitted to the Commissioner of Education for approval no later than February 1 of each year in which biennial review takes place.

Note: Prior policy, Policy Manual, School-Based Planning (June 1, 1995), revised

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