

INTERIM REPORT ON ACHIEVEMENT OF DISTRICT GOALS 2009-2010
February 1, 2010

1. To increase student achievement on standardized assessments

- Increase number of classified students achieving proficiency
- Increase number of general education students achieving advanced proficiency

During the summer and early fall of 2009, principals, supervisors and teachers reviewed student performance on standardized assessments and developed school level goals and action plans to address identified needs. At the public Board meeting, a report on student achievement was made and discussed. In the report on student achievement, it was noted that district students perform at or above the level of achievement found in similar school districts throughout the state. Teachers, principals and supervisors developed professional development and professional growth plans focusing on improving student performance on standardized assessments for under performing groups.

As a result of this analysis of student performance, several initiatives were undertaken, specifically with relationship to the special education population. The child study team members and curricula specialists monitored IEP requirements, became more knowledgeable about the core curriculum content standards and assessment formats, conducted training in assessment formats, and incorporated test-taking skills in classes. A pilot program was undertaken at Union School with respect to the special education population by developing prescriptive teaching methods for all special education students in grades 4-8. This was done to address a specific need at Union School to advance the performance of students at that location as they prepare for the spring round of assessments. In addition, test preparation classes are planned for the spring months in math and language arts at Pierrepont, Union and Rutherford High School.

2. To continue work on the energy audit and implementation of energy-savings plans

During the summer and early fall of 2009, the district business administrator, director of buildings and grounds, superintendent, and district architect, developed timelines and met with Concord Engineering, the firm that was contracted to conduct the energy audit. At the same time, a proposal was prepared for the replacement of the roof at Rutherford High School. The architect presented this proposal to the Board of Education at the September 2009 meeting. During the fall months, the Concord Engineering staff made a number of visits to our schools to commence the energy audit. In October 2009, the Rutherford High School roofing project was submitted to the Department of Education for approval and consideration for funding. The energy audit was completed in late November and a preliminary report was presented to the Board of Education at its regular meeting in December 2009.

At this point, the roof project is still awaiting action by the State Department of Education in Trenton. However, information has been provided to us indicating that review of all projects is currently suspended at the direction of the governor. As a result of this development, the business administrator and superintendent have developed a funding proposal and are preparing it for presentation to the Board so that the Board can make a decision in February as to whether to proceed and authorize the district to go out to bid on the roofing project. The final report on the energy audit should soon be provided to the district. Upon its receipt, the district administration will review the recommendations, establish a cost estimate, and a priority list for consideration by the Board. In addition, several of the projects suggested in the preliminary report from Concord Engineering are being prepared for presentation to Congressman Rothman's office for consideration for federal funding.

3. To enhance student learning opportunities in science, reading and world language, in particular science at the high school level, reading in grades k-3 and world languages in grades k-8

During the fall months, the principals, supervisors and teachers have reviewed the current status of the k-3 reading program, have reviewed the current status of the k-8 world language program, and have reviewed the current status of the high school science program, as currently constituted.

- Science Program - The district is currently in the first year of the revised science sequencing at the high school level. All grade 9 and 10 students are enrolled in biology for the 2009-2010 school year. Next year (2010-2011) all grade 10 and 11 students will be enrolled in chemistry, followed by physics in school year 2011-2012 for grades 11 and 12 students. The new state graduation guidelines require students to take 15 credits, including laboratory biology, chemistry, environmental science or physics, and an additional lab inquiry-based science. This means that by the year 2011-2012, the science department will need to offer more science electives than the current offerings. It should be noted that the school district has been operating in excess of the new state graduation guidelines for several years. The science department has proposed, and is investigating the following possibilities for elective courses:
 - a. Forensic Science
 - b. Astronomy and Meteorology
 - c. Geophysical Science and/or Advanced Placement Environmental Science

Currently, one of our staff members is researching and writing a curriculum for a forensic science course. Department members believe that with earth science moving to grade 8, elective courses with earth science themes would be appropriate. In addition, at the present time, environmental science is a third year science elective for students not wishing to take chemistry. Other possible ideas for science electives would be to expand anatomy and physiology and/or marine biology to full year courses, rather than semester courses. The science department will continue to investigate these elective courses as the year progresses.

- K-8 World Language Program
 - a. All students begin with a basic introduction to Spanish language study in kindergarten, taught by their regular kindergarten teacher. This continues through grades 1 and 2. Beginning in grade 3, students are provided with two periods per week of 30 minutes each instruction in Spanish by a Spanish certified teacher. Beginning in grade 6, all students have the opportunity to experience an exploratory study in Spanish and French. At the end of grade 6, students elect a level 1 world language study in French, Spanish or Latin. They continue this study in grade 8. Upon completion of Spanish 7 and 8, students who earn a "C" grade or better may be recommended to commence their high school language study at level 2. Based upon this sequence of study, students are able to complete up through level 5 of world languages in French, Latin or Spanish at Rutherford High School.
 - b. Members of the world language department and supervisor have proposed the following as initial recommendations to enhance student learning opportunities in the k-8 world language program. They are looking to incorporate benchmark assessments in the grade 1-6 Spanish curriculum. They are looking for additional professional development for Spanish instruction and content will be provided for teachers in grades k-2. Mid-year assessments in grades 7 and 8 will be conducted in the world language program as a means to identify how well students were meeting the standards in these areas, as well as to better align the grade 7 and 8 levels content more closely with the level 1 at the high school. This is in an effort to increase the numbers of students who will enter into level 2 language study in grade 9.

Greater focus will be given to all world language teachers speaking in their target language in an effort to increase the number of students who will graduate proficient in the target language. There will also be an increased effort at the high school to increase student retention in levels 3, 4 and advanced placement classes. Additional articulation meetings and professional development activities will be scheduled for all world language teachers.

- Reading in Grades K-3

Lincoln and Washington School teachers are in the second full year of implementing the revised language arts literacy curriculum. Both Lincoln and Washington School are focused on improving students' independent reading skills. In order to reach this goal, teachers are implementing many of the research-based strategies in the Macmillan McGraw Hill *Treasures* reading series that was purchased two years ago. Teachers are using the balanced approach promoted through the series. They use whole group and small group instruction and use a variety of text genres.

Teachers are conducting book walks and modeling predictions. Students justify their predictions and then make adjustments to their predictions as new information is learned. Teachers are pre-teaching vocabulary and sharing examples of word usage. Students are exposed to new vocabulary words a few times before interacting with the text. Fluency is modeled and emphasized. There has been teacher training on comprehension strategies that needs to be taught through direct instruction. Comprehension strategies include visualizing, retelling, asking questions of the author, setting a purpose for reading, predicting, monitoring of understanding, and changing rate of reading. In addition students are asked to make text-to-text, text to self and text to world connections. All of these reading strategies improve comprehension. Students are exposed to fiction and non-fiction text and are learning to approach each using strategies that are applicable for each text format.

Diagnostic assessments such as running records, weekly assessments and benchmark assessments are essential to understanding how the brain functions during the reading process. Running records require students to read a leveled short selection. As students read, the teacher is taking copious notes on the errors made, retelling skills, and comprehension strategies applied. Teachers then examine the data and make generalizations about the skills being applied well and those skills that need to be strengthened. The teachers are able to use the data to identify a student's reading level and then plan small group instruction for students at their instructional reading level. Students' are retested periodically to note progress and plan for instruction/intervention.

The ultimate goal is to have all children reading at an above grade level by the end of third grade. The instructional strategies identified above, as well as individual student intervention, will continue in review for the remainder of the school year.

