School Alliance for Continuous Improvement

Tully Central School District K-12 English Language Arts TRAINING SESSION ONLY NOT A COMPLETE REVIEW

April 2007



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Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
4-5	Introduction and Overview
6-7	Acknowledgements
	Information Sources
8 9 10-11	 Persons Interviewed Documents Indicator #1:
12-14	The leadership system is linked to goals for student performance <i>Indicator #2:</i> Instructional practices are evaluated and modified based on assessment
15-16	of student performance. <i>Indicator #3:</i> The curriculum is linked to standards for and data on student
17-18	performance. <i>Indicator #4:</i> Professional and organizational development is linked to student learning needs.
19-21	<i>Indicator #5:</i> Data management and communication are linked to improving the entire learning organization
22-23	<i>Indicator #6:</i> Technology for teaching and learning is linked to student opportunities and performance
24	Areas of Strength
25-27	Recommendations for Growth
28	Innovative/Best Practices



Introduction and Overview

This feedback report is a product of the School Alliance for Continuous Improvement (SACI). Produced by the District Review Team, it includes:

- General information about SACI;
- Scoring information based on evidence pertaining to the district's educational program;
- Strengths, recommendations for growth, and innovative practices identified by the team;
- The indicators and scoring rubrics that comprise the Balanced Performance Model.

The districts in this alliance represent rural and suburban schools from across the State. These districts include diverse populations in terms of ethnic and socioeconomic factors, and demonstrate a range of results in student performance as indicated by State measurements. These districts share certain common interests:

- A commitment to rigorous standards for all students;
- A commitment to assessing student performance against international, national and local measure of excellence, both quantitatively and qualitatively;
- A commitment to using data to guide school improvement and planning to continuously evaluate the impact and effectiveness of school improvement efforts.

In order to operationalize these commitments, district representatives have employed systems thinking and a data driven approach to determine how to affect teaching and learning in their districts. Representatives have worked closely together to:

- Develop a model to monitor, measure and report the effectiveness of district systems by analyzing data related to identified performance indicators;
- Train teams of teachers and administrators as "critical friends" -- professionals who can externally review and validate evidence of a district's progress in planning, implementing and attaining results and provide useful feedback which encourages self-reflection and continuous improvement;

• Create tools for identifying, and forums for sharing successful and innovative practices that help all students meet higher standards.

During a week in April, 2007, a group of staff members, inclusive of the superintendent, were trained in the SACI model, focusing on the K-12 English Language Arts Program. The training team gathered data from interviews, documents and observation and used them to reach a consensus on data related to each of six indicators. This report presents a summary of team decisions related to the evidence found and agreed upon utilizing a self assessment training model. The report represents a first effort of the staff members to view and interpret data systemically.

District Review Team

This report was created as a result a collaborative effort between the District Review Team and the hosting district.

District Coordinators

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Tully Central School District	Feedback Report – April 2007 - Page 6

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Information Sources

Interviews:

The following 35 individuals were interviewed by the team as part of the District Review information gathering process:

Academic Intervention Teacher **Elementary Principal** Grade 1 teachers (3) Grade 2 teachers (3) Grade 3 Teachers (2) Grade 4 (2) Grade 5 teachers (2) Grade 5/6 Combo teacher Grade 6 Teacher Grade 7-12 guidance counselors (2) High School English teacher (4) High School science teacher Junior high School mathematics teacher Kindergarten teachers (2) Librarian Parents (2) **Reading Recovery Teacher** Special Education teachers (3) Superintendent of Schools

Documents:

The following documents were reviewed by the team as part of the District Review information gathering process:

6+1 Traits writing and assessment Academic Intervention Services Plan 2005-2008 Comprehensive Developmental Education Plan Goals and Minutes **District Mentoring Plan 2003** District Website Board of Education Goals and Mission Statement Elementary report card forms Elementary staff development and committee meeting minutes English as a second language internet activities English Curriculum Map 9-12 English Language Arts test results English Language Arts testing data for grades 3-8 (1998-2006) English texts 7-12 High School course catalog K-3 Early literacy profile forms Library Media Center Guide New York State Report Card Partners in Achievement Action Plan Phonics Grade K, Pinnell and Fountas Professional Development Plan 2003 Professional Development Plan form Quantitative Reading Inventory workbook Reading recovery summary report (date?) Self reflection form Staff Development Day Agenda, October 2006 Standards and Benchmarks K-8 Student writing samples Technology Plan 2007-2010 The Nuts and Bolts of Teaching Writing, Calkins Treasures Basal and workbook **Tully Elementary Vision Statement**

NOTE: As this was the initial training exercise for the district staff there was not a sufficient understanding of the scope of the SACI process. In that respect the team felt that the collection of items for review was not sufficient to provide a complete picture of the program.

#1: The leadership system is linked to goals for student performance.

Definition:

The degree to which the district operates from the perspective of a shared vision/agreed upon goals that are driven by student performance.

Plan:

- The Board of Education set goals for the 2006-2007 school year, which are posted on the district website. One Board of Education goal is to increase the number of students participating in Advanced Placement (AP) and/or college-credit courses by 10% over the next two years.
- There is an organizational structure which divides building level administrative responsibilities among four people.
- A district mission statement is posted on the district website.
- There is documentation of an elementary school vision statement.
- The district is in the process of developing a long-range plan using the Comprehensive District Education Plan (CDEP) as a model.
- The projection is that there will be a 9% increase in the number of students attending a four-year college in 2007, compared to 2006.

Implementation:

- To increase student participation in Advanced Placement courses, guidance counselors conducted student interviews. Admission into the courses is based on teacher recommendations, academic achievement, and student interest.
- Staff provides data to the administration regarding instruction, curriculum, and building concerns via:
 - Building Advisory Committees
 - o Grade level meetings
 - Faculty meetings
 - Department meetings
- Teacher interviews indicate that a collaborative culture exists in the following areas:
 Transition from elementary to secondary school

Tully Central School District

- Use of 7th and 8th grade common team planning time
- Monthly high school special education department monthly meetings
- Elementary grade level meetings

- Interview data indicates a 12% increase in the number of students currently enrolled in AP and/or college credit courses.
- A Board of Education goal of 10% more students enrolled in Advanced Placement courses has been exceeded.

#2 Instructional practices are evaluated and modified based on assessment of student performance.

Definition:

The degree to which educators use student data to drive instructional change.

<u>Plan</u>:

- The *Lucy Calkins* approach is intended to be used to address the writing process in kindergarten and grade 1. There is a process in place to incorporate *6+1 Traits of Writing*® in grades 2-10.
- An academic intervention service plan exists for grades K-12. Linked to this plan is a provision to follow New York State guidelines to provide differentiated instruction for identified students in a least restrictive environment.
- There is a plan for the utilization of Reading Recovery® in grade 1.
- There is a plan for a writing folder with selected samples for grades K-6.
- There is a plan for the selection of students for entrance into Honors and Advanced Placement (AP) courses.
- There is a written plan for summer reading lists in grades 7-12.
- There is a plan that exists to differentiate instruction for English as a Second Language (ESL)students.
- There is a process for including phonics instruction in the lower primary grades.

- The district uses a variety of assessments such as: profile sheets, rubrics, portfolios, etc. to monitor student progress and modify instruction.
- The 6+1 *Traits of Writing*® model is used in grades 2-6. Beginning in the 2007-2008 school year instructional kits, which include common grade level lessons, will be used.
- Grades K-1 utilize the *Lucy Calkins* writing workshop method to meet writing standards and benchmarks.
- Reading Recovery[®] instruction is provided according to the Reading Recovery guidelines.

- Special education services are provided in a variety of ways, such as: Teacher Assistant support, push-in and pull-out programs. A consultant teacher and resource model is used in the district. Special education and classroom teachers collaborate to monitor/modify instruction both in daily assignments and for preparation for state assessments.
- In grades 7-12, textbooks supplement literature-based curriculum.
- Teachers piloting the *Treasures*® reading series differentiate their instructional methodology.
- AIS instruction includes: *KidBiz*®, 6+1*Traits of Writing*®, writing lab, reading lab, push-in lessons, etc.
- Grade K-6 teachers collect writing samples at pre-determined points in the year. Teachers review the writing as needed.
- The Liberty Partnership Program (LPP) provides tutoring to struggling students in grades 7-12.
- 7th and 8th grade team meetings occur once during every six-day cycle.
- Anecdotal evidence indicates that vertical collaboration exists in grades 7-12.
- The organization of the literacy instruction varies.
- At the secondary level some social studies and English language arts teachers collaborate on a research unit and Document Based Questions (DBQs).
- *Mosaic of Thought*® strategies are available to supplement K-6 ELA instruction.
- Instructional strategies have been introduced at the secondary level, such as: 6+1 *Traits of Writing*® and Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review (SQ3R). Some writing instruction is modified to meet the needs of students.
- At the primary level, Fountas and Pinnell Phonics is available for instructional use.
- The communication course at the High School level provides opportunities for students to create and produce television and radio programs featuring school events and activities. These activities strengthen their speaking and listening skills.

- Teacher interviews indicate that students' writing skills have improved as a result of using 6+1 *Traits of Writing*[®].
- Based on teacher testimony, student writing at the elementary has improved as a result of the use of the *Lucy Calkins writing workshop*®. Teachers attribute this improvement in part to the fact that the workshop has made students feel that they have a purpose for writing.

#3: The curriculum is linked to standards for and data on student performance

Definition:

The degree to which curriculum is linked to state and district standards for and data on student performance.

<u>Plan:</u>

- There is a process for secondary teachers in the English department to collaborate on content and materials for their curriculum.
- A K-8 standards and benchmarks document exists that encompasses writing, reading, viewing, media, listening, and speaking.
- The *Treasures*® basal series is intended to be the primary instructional tool in grades 2-6 for reading beginning 2007-2008.
- There is a plan to purchase 6 + 1 *Writing Traits*® kits for use in grades 2-6 for writing instruction and curriculum.
- An English Language Arts curriculum map exists for grades 9-12.
- There exists a process by which students are placed in Advanced Placement and Honors courses.
- There exists a Program of Studies booklet at the secondary level that lists English course descriptions and the progression of courses. It also includes future elective possibilities.

- The grade K-6 teachers are guided by the K-8 ELA standards and benchmarks documents. Based on interviews, benchmarks are available to teachers in grades 7 and 8.
- Grades K-1 utilize *Lucy Calkins program* as a means to meet writing standards and benchmarks.
- In grades 7-12, textbooks supplement a literature-based curriculum.

- Based upon interview data, implementation of the junior and senior high curriculum is driven by individual teacher choice.
- College credit-bearing and Advanced Placement courses are offered to seniors.
- In Grades 9-11, teachers use rubrics that match New York State rubrics to evaluate student writing.
- Teachers use current writing samples from students to evaluate their ability.
- Some teachers in Grades 2-6 have piloted the *Treasures*® basal; they have received some staff development regarding implementation of the program.
- Special Education teachers modify English curriculum in the high school for both daily assignments and in preparation for state assessments.

- At this time the team has not been able to identify student outcomes directly related to curriculum.
- In 2007, 34% of grade 12 students are enrolled in an AP course

#4: Professional and organizational development is linked to student learning needs.

Definition:

The degree to which professional and/or organizational development is linked to student learning needs as measured by student performance.

Plan:

- A professional development plan exists in the district.
- There is a formal, contractually based mentor program.
- There is a process for all second year teachers to have the opportunity to attend training in the Responsive Classroom (K-6) and Instructional Theory into Practice (7-12).
- There is an action plan for Partners in Achievement.
- There is a contractual cycle for teacher evaluation.

- Teachers attend conferences throughout the year. They have the opportunity to choose conferences for professional growth. There is widespread consensus that teachers attend conferences of their choice.
- Staff Development Committees at the building level are responsible for organizing professional development for Superintendent's Conference Days.
- Building level Staff Development Committees are responsible for approval of conference requests.
- At the elementary level, mentors and protégés meet formally and informally throughout the year. High school mentors were assigned to new teachers at the secondary level.
- Summer curriculum development opportunities exist for teachers.
- Teachers develop and implement individual professional development plans which include reflection on the improvement of professional practice.

- ◆ All three Reading Recovery[™] teachers are enrolled in continuing contact for ongoing training. These teachers share instructional strategies with colleagues at the elementary level.
- Participation in the PALS project activities occurred during the 2006-2007 school year.
- Staff is offered technology tutorials on a regular basis.

• 2005-2006 Reading Recovery summary report indicates that 61% of first-grade Reading Recovery students graduated from the program.

#5: Data Management and communication are linked to improving the entire learning organization

Definition

The degree to which information is managed and communicated for the purpose of improving the entire learning organization

Plan:

- There is a process to record and report student data using Data Mentor®, Grade Machine®, Student Information System® (SIS), IEP Direct®, etc.
- There is a process by which a student writing folder is to be established for each student in kindergarten and added to through sixth grade.
- The district has a process to communicate information to the community via the district website, Knight Insight[®], direct mailings, etc.
- There is a process to communicate student progress via quarterly report cards, interim reports, parent conferences, Committee on Special Education (CSE) meetings, IEP progress reports, Academic Eligibility Policy, etc.
- There is a process to communicate within the district through the use of handbooks, e-mail, staff meetings, etc.
- There is a process for generating an item analysis of the New York State assessments.
- There is a process for a Child Study Team a Youth Intervention Team in the elementary building and a Pupil Services Team in the junior senior high school to meet and make student decisions regarding the provision of appropriate support.

- Staff provides information to administration regarding instruction, curriculum, and building concerns via:
 - o Building Advisory Committees
 - Grade level meetings
 - Faculty meetings
 - o Department meetings

- Data is collected to determine entrance of students into Honors and Advanced Placement courses.
- The K-12 student cumulative folders are available to teachers.
- Data is used by staff for decision making in the ELA curricula and instructional areas.
- Data can be obtained by staff upon request.
- First grade teachers indicate that they are collecting data (running records, sight vocabulary, and fluency) for literacy instruction.
- Data Mentor® is being used by some staff members.
- PSAT/PLAN results are shared with students and teachers.
- Informal meetings, newsletters, interims, class lists, letters, e-mail, phone calls, student report cards, and the district website are methods of communication to district stakeholders.
- The piloted basal reading series, *Treasures*®, in Grades (2-6) has assessments that help teachers collect more student data and compare scores on different skills.

- 2005-06 English Language Arts Assessments among all students scoring at Levels 3 and 4
 - o Grade 3: 75%
 o Grade 4: 71%
 o Grade 5: 71%
 o Grade 6: 69%
 o Grade 7 70%
 o Grade 8: 55%
- Student Achievement on the Comprehensive English Regents after Four Years has remained at a high, constant level. The percent of students passing is in the positive direction, while the percent of students achieving at the mastery level is on a slightly negative slope.

Cohort Year	Graduation Year	Number Tested	% 55- 64	% Passing 65-84	% Mastery 85-100	Total Passing %age 55-100
2001	2005	92	4	51	45	100
2000	2004	83	6	46	47	99
1999 Data are takan from	2003	105	8	45	47	99

Data are taken from NYSED School Report Card, April 2006

• In 2004 and 2005, the percentage of grade 8 students scoring at level 2 on the New York State ELA examination dropped as a higher percentage of students scored at level 3.

Test Year	% of students scoring at level 2	% of students scoring at level 3
2005	29	<u>48</u>
2004	47	38
2003	37	35

• In 2004 and 2005, the percentage of students at grade 4 scoring at level 2 dropped while the percentage of students scoring at level 3 increased.

Test Year	% of students scoring at level 2	% of students scoring at level 3
2005	26	57
2004	31	52
2003	21	58

#6: Technology for Teaching and Learning

Definition:

The degree to which technology is integrated with teaching and learning (curriculum, instruction, and assessment) to provide educational opportunities for all students.

- A draft District Technology Plan exists for the years 2007-2010 that includes a budget, lists of acquired hard and software, and a scope and sequence of computer skills that are to be introduced, reinforced, and practiced K-12.
- A process exists for decisions and information from the technology committee to be shared with staff via the district website and through committee members.

- In the high school, computers for student use exist in the library and the lab, which is staffed by a full-time teaching assistant.
- In the elementary school, computers for student use are in the library, the computer lab, and in classrooms.
- Computer labs are utilized to publish student work, for research purposes, standardized test preparation, and for projects using PowerPoint®.
- Technology is used for students with special needs (Dragon Speak®, Kurzweil®). These are voice amplification systems.
- Many areas of each building offer wireless internet and network access.
- Technology is used in grades 7 and 8 students to improve reading comprehension (KidBiz ®).
- Staff is offered technology tutorials on a regular basis.
- Every faculty member is issued a laptop for school use.
- Portable laptop carts are available in each building for use in classrooms.
- In the junior and senior high, there exists a large body of subject-specific software.
- Some teachers use internet learning sites to enhance English Language Arts instruction (KidBiz®, School Island®, Enchanted Learning®, Brain Pop®).

- ELMOs and monitors are used in some classrooms
- Some teachers used video streaming to enhance learning.

• According to teacher interviews, KidBiz® has improved reading levels in grades 7 and 8.

Areas of Strength

The following areas of strength in the district's overall programs were identified during the District Review process:

- Teacher autonomy
- Character education at the elementary level
- Highly competent teachers
- District drama programs
- Teacher initiative for professional growth
- Student transition between elementary and junior high school
- Displays of student work in district and community
- Youth Intervention Team K-6
- Direction of present leadership
- Writing programs K-9
- Positive morale at secondary level
- Administrative support for staff, K-12
- Staff resiliency during frequent administrative changes
- Visibility of Superintendent
- Teacher-administration relationship
- Well behaved students
- Support for technology and provision for an instructional technology position
- Superintendent's and librarian's support of fostering communication through technology
- Provision of staff development opportunities and positive response to conference requests, inclusive of special education
- Summer curriculum work
- Transportation of senior citizens to school events
- Utilization of the school by the community

Recommendations for Growth

The following recommendations for growth in the district's overall program were identified during the District Review process:

Leadership

- Due to frequent administrative changes, many initiatives have been started and not finished. It is recommended that the most successful ones be kept and that others be officially phased out.
- There are mission and vision statements in the district which do not serve to drive instruction. It is recommended that the district revisit this area and either create statements that lend themselves to driving instruction or retire the ones in existence.
- The department chair who has ELA responsibilities at the secondary level should have a job description which is widely disseminated and clearly understood by all stakeholders.
- The leadership of the K-12 literacy program appears fragmented. The recommendation is to create an action plan, identify activities, and person(s) responsible and to design and implement an accountability profile. Included in this plan should be activities allowing librarians, special teachers, etc. to have access to the curriculum on a grade level basis.

Instructional Issues

- Review your AIS plan specifically in the areas of identification of students, exiting strategies, scheduling and consistency of interventions. Examine the implementation at all grade levels to see if the program is achieving its goals. Once reviewed, devise strategies to assure that staff knows and understands the program in its entirety.
- The district needs to examine if the assessment scores obtained on state exams are given to the staff in a timely manner, allowing them to modify instruction. If not, strategies might need to be designed to have the results in hand.
- Collaboration related to instructional approaches occurs on a horizontal level. The vertical articulation between grades and schools needs to be addressed in relationship to English Language Arts.

- The district should review its Pit Stop Program at the Junior Senior High School level to determine if it can be replicated for English Language Arts.
- The writing folder is being completed as intended by some teachers and not others. It also does not appear to go past grade six as an effective instructional tool. It is recommended that the district review the utilitization of this tool and either abandon it or implement strategies to assure its implementation.

Curriculum

- The Board policy stating a specific goal of increasing AP and or college credit participation needs to be linked to offering these courses on a continuous basis.
- The K-3 staff needs to be conversant with the fourth-grade state exams. Teachers who are not familiar with assessment expectations should be exposed to the actual assessments. If already done, reconnect with staff on this item.
- The English Language Arts curriculum taught in regular education, academic intervention, and IEP driven programs needs to be reviewed for congruence.
- At the secondary level, the district needs to have grade level benchmarks consistently implemented in a collaborative manner. A decision should be made to determine if adequate resources are available to cover the essential curriculum. This should facilitate collaboration and alignment of curriculum.
- Once a decision is made to adopt and implement a basal series, the role of the phonics program and the impact of the writing program have to be part of the implementation process.

Professional Development

- The professional development program should be reviewed to see whether it is being implemented as intended and whether it is current and meets district concerns. During the review, issues related to the use of staff development days (Superintendent Conference Days) can be covered.
- The mentoring program as implemented is inconsistent at various levels and has become less formal. It is recommended that the district review both the mentoring plan and its implementation.
- The staff development offerings as they relate to the implementation of new initiatives needs to be examined for effectiveness in the successful implementation of programs (6+1 Writing Traits[®], basal program, etc.)

Data Management and Communication

- The availability of Data Mentor® and its utilization should be reviewed to see if it is being used in a consistent fashion and impacting teaching and learning.
- Error coding of state assessments is within the capacity of the district. Efforts to operationalize this tool that assist in its utilization will enable teachers to gather assessment data to make instructional and curriculum decisions.
- Collaboration within the district is an issue between grades, departments, and schools. A data management implementation plan with this as a key activity would facilitate a common dialogue. "We are all in this together," needs to be promoted.

Technology

- The district has a draft K-12 technology plan, which is not widely disseminated and understood. Efforts are needed to communicate this information to staff. This is essential to move the district to utilize the plan and implement the sections specific to teaching and learning.
- Once operating under the plan, the district should consider the utilization of technological learning stations in class and pursue programs such as video streaming.

The following innovative and best practices were identified during the District Review process:

- Pit-stop 9
- Communication course leading to production of local television show featuring school activities on Time Warner Cable
- Display of college acceptance letters
- Summer reading lists for grades 7-12
- District wide good news board
- Liberty Partnership Program providing tutorial support 7-12
- Junior High School-Senior Citizen Pie Making Program