

School Improvement External Team Visitation Report For Nebraska Framework Schools

School/District Name : Dorchester Public School

City: Dorchester, Nebraska

Dates of Visit: October 24 - 25, 2016

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----------|
| External Visitation Team Members | 3 |
| Onsite Review Agenda | 4 |
| Introductory Comments | 5 |
| Overview of Improvement Process | 7 |
| School Improvement Goals | 9 |

External Visitation Team

Team Leader: Suzanne Whisler

| | First | Last | Institution & Position | Address | Phone | E-mail |
|--------|----------------|----------------|---|---------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Chair | Suzanne | Whisler | ESU 4 Director of Professional Development | 919 16th St. Auburn, NE 68305 | W 402.274.4354 C 402.274.8005 | swhisler@esu4.net |
| Member | Diane | Beninato | Instructional Coach K-4 Fremont Public Schools | 130 E 9th St. Fremont, NE 68025 | W 402.727.3000 | diane.beninato@fpsmail.org |
| Member | Brent | Cole | Middle School Assistant Principal Crete Public Schools | 150 East 15th St. Crete, NE 68333 | W 402.826.5844 | brent.cole@creteschools.org |
| Member | Ryan | Clark | Reading Coach/Title I Tri-County Public Schools | 72520 Highway 103 DeWitt, NE 68341 | W 402.683.2015 | ryan.clark@tricotyschools.org |
| Member | Cheryl | Krafka | Secondary Math Teacher Formerly with Auburn Public Schools | 2202 E Lake Drive Union, NE 68455 | H 402.263.3812 | cheryl.krafka@gmail.com |

**Dorchester Public School
External Team Visitation
October 24 - 25, 2016**

October 24

- | | |
|--------------------|---|
| 4:00 - 5:15 | External Team Meeting |
| 5:30 - 5:40 | Introductions |
| 5:40 - 6:15 | Dinner |
| 6:15 - 7:30 | Overview of the Continuous Improvement Process Administration School Improvement Committee |
| 7:30 - 8:00 | External Team Discussions |

October 25

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| 7:45 - 8:15 | Coffee, Rolls, Overview of the Agenda |
| 8:15 - 8:30 | Tour of the Building |
| 8:45 - 9:30 | Teacher Interviews Reading (K-12) |
| 9:40 - 10:20 | Teacher Interviews Math (K-12) |
| 10:30 - 11:00 | Elementary Students Interview |
| 11:00 - 11:30 | Secondary Students Interview |
| 11:30 - 12:30 | Lunch & Interviews |
| 12:30 - 2:00 | Team Exploration |
| 2:00 - 3:30 | External Team Work |
| 3:30 - 4:00 | Exit Report - Library |

Introductory Comments

Team Leader: Suzanne Whisler

A. Purpose of the External Visit

The purpose of the visit was to assist Dorchester Public School in moving forward in achieving its school improvement goals of improving reading comprehension and math computation skills by providing an outside, objective view of Dorchester's continuous improvement process. The role of the external team was to validate the district's continuous improvement process and offer professional advice regarding their process and school improvement goals. As specified by Nebraska accreditation requirements, schools must engage in a review of the continuous improvement process once every five years.

B. Description of the Process for Gathering Information for the External Team Report

As part of the continuous improvement process, the external team reviewed Dorchester's school profile and the Nebraska Department of Education State of Schools Report for the district. In addition, the team conducted interviews with the school improvement steering committee, the administrative team, teachers, and students. Based upon examination of continuous improvement documentation provided by the district, as well as information gleaned from the interview process, the team was able to highlight commendations and suggest recommendations for improvement.

C. Background Information Specific to the District

Dorchester Public School is a K-12 district located in eastern Nebraska. There are approximately 190 students enrolled in the district's single attendance center located in Dorchester, Nebraska.

The mission of Dorchester Public School is to prepare students to read with comprehension, write clearly, compute mathematically, and utilize information and technology to solve problems. The vision of the district is to create an educational system that provides all students opportunity to practice and receive feedback in all academic areas to foster lifelong learning for future success. Dorchester's teachers average 14.18 years of teaching experience with 31.82% of the district's teachers having master's degrees. 100% of the district's teachers are NCLB qualified.

The district's free and reduced priced meals rate is 38.46% and the district mobility rate is 9.5% both of which are below the state average. The percentage of students recognized as English Language Learners is 6.7%. This is slightly higher than the state average. The percentage of students receiving special education services is 10.06% which is lower than the state average. Additionally, the district's graduation rate for the 2014 - 2015 school year was 93.75%. There has been a downward trend in student enrollment since 2009.

Surveys of parents and students indicates an overall positive attitude towards the school district. The

students feel a sense of belonging and safe in school. They feel respected and cared for by staff and that quality work is an expectation of teachers. Parents feel welcomed in the school and that the school is meeting the academic needs of students by expecting quality work of its students. Small class size and commitment of staff were also noted as strengths by parents.

D. Additional Remarks, etc.

Dorchester Public School has a well-defined continuous improvement process that focuses on improving learning for all students. The process has a comprehensive profile that includes analysis of multiple sources of data to determine the school improvement goals and course of action.

The Steering Team reviews the Continuous Improvement Continuums for Schools each spring. The team rated the school's efforts in the following categories:

- Information and Analysis
 - Approach - 4
 - Implementation - 3
 - Outcome - 3
- Student Achievement
 - Approach - 2
 - Implementation - 3
 - Outcome - 2
- Quality Planning
 - Approach - 3
 - Implementation - 4
 - Outcome - 3
- Professional Learning
 - Approach - 3
 - Implementation - 3
 - Outcome - 3
- Leadership
 - Approach - 4
 - Implementation - 3
 - Outcome - 4
- Partnership Development
 - Approach - 3
 - Implementation - 3
 - Outcome - 4
- Continuous Improvement and Evaluation
 - Approach - 3
 - Implementation - 3
 - Outcome - 3

Overview of Improvement Process

Reviewer's Name: Suzanne Whisler

I. Description of the Continuous Improvement Process: (Team membership, timelines, summary of activities, and for public schools, a description of how multicultural education is incorporated into the process.)

Dorchester Public School uses the Nebraska Framework as the model for their continuous improvement efforts. The steering committee and administration lead the school improvement process with support and assistance from all staff. The team meets several times during the year to review and consider school improvement goals and district initiatives. The continuous improvement process is clearly documented in the district's school improvement action plans which are updated yearly and go back to the 2009 - 2010 school year.

The district has a very complete profile that includes a description of the district and its students, school improvement goals, and action plans for improving student performance in reading and math. The profile contains a complete collection of student performance data, demographic data, program data, and perceptual data. All data are displayed in well-defined charts and graphs that give a concise picture of the district's data. The profile contains evidence of analysis of multiple sources of trend data including DIBELS, MAP Reading and Math, NeSA Reading and Math. In addition, data from ACT, EXPLORE, and PLAN was included in the profile. District disaggregated data included Free and Reduced Lunch, ELL, Gender, and Special Education.

Evidence of the district's continuous improvement process can also be found on the district's website <http://dorchester.school.org/>. This aides in the communication of the process to all stakeholders.

II. Commendations: (Successful activities, procedures and accomplishments in the overall progress of the Continuous Improvement Process.)

- Dorchester Public School has established a culture of "family" in which all members are cared for, valued, and respected. Administrators, teachers, students, and patrons take great pride in the district's positive and safe learning environment.
- The district's profile provides a clear and concise overview of Dorchester Public School's data and continuous improvement process. The data rich environment aides in guiding instructional decisions.
- Dorchester Public School has a comprehensive continuous improvement process that goes above and beyond the process outlined in the Nebraska Framework. All members of the staff are strategically involved in the process and committed to improving student achievement for all.

III. Recommendations for Next Steps in the Overall School Improvement Process

- Revisit curriculum to identify essential standards for each grade level in math and reading. Explore

methods to measure student performance on the identified essential standards.

- Continue utilizing information from MAP reports to help inform instructional decisions in math and reading. Consider administering MAP up to two times a year for all students to measure student growth and growth towards school improvement goals.
- Revisit the lists of interventions to ensure research-based strategies are being implemented consistently across all levels.
- Interventions resources such as the ones listed below may aide in your review.
 - What Works Clearinghouse Practices Guides in reading, math, and for working with ELL students <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/product>
 - Kansas RTI Modules <http://www.kansasmtss.org/pdf/Structuring-Guides/Structuring-Module-1-Guide.pdf>
 - National Center on Intensive Interventions <http://www.intensiveintervention.org/>
 - Reading Rockets <http://www.readingrockets.org/>
 - Best Evidence <http://www.bestevidence.org/>
 - National Council of Teachers of Math <http://www.nctm.org/>
 - *Mathematical Mindsets* by Jo Boaler
 - youcubed - Jo Boaler's website <https://www.youcubed.org/>
 - 24 Proven Programs for Struggling Reading <http://www.successforall.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Program-Summary-Struggling-Readers-09122016.pdf>
 - Promising Practices Network <http://www.promisingpractices.net/>
 - Adolescent Literacy Strategies http://www.adlit.org/strategy_library/
 - Hattie's Index of Teaching Strategies <http://www.teachthought.com/pedagogy/hatties-ascending-order/>
 - Intervention Central
 - Building RTI: Instruction and Interventions <http://buildingrti.utexas.org/>
 - *Principles of Instruction* by Barak Rosenshine <https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/Rosenshine.pdf>
 - Retrieval Practice Guide <http://www.retrievalpractice.org/>

School Improvement Goals

Reviewer's Name: Diane Beninato, Brent Cole, Ryan Clark

I. Goal # 1

All students will improve their reading comprehension skills.

II. Comments about the Student Performance Goal (including goals, assessments, interventions/strategies, and/or staff development)

Dorchester Public School does a tremendous job in caring for every single student. The relationships teachers have with their students promotes an atmosphere that is centered around student learning. During the entire external visit, the team truly felt a strong sense of family that extended to the staff, students and patrons of the community. This environment has allowed the district to make progress toward their goal of improving reading comprehension for all students.

The staff regularly divides into data teams to evaluate DIBELS benchmark assessments. The teams also pay close attention to the fall MAP test to decide which students need an improvement plan for the rest of the semester. If any student is under the 50th percentile on the fall MAP reading test, they will be placed on an individual plan for improvement. These improvement plans are managed by classroom teachers, the Title I teacher, and the special education teacher who provide Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions during the day.

Over the last few years, Dorchester Public School has seen an increase in the ELL population for their school. Specifically, the elementary currently has a 13% ELL population. It is a great asset to the district to have a Spanish speaking staff member who works closely with the ELL students. This staff member has a schedule to pull ELL students from the class to work toward their fluency and comprehension skills.

The school district has made purposeful decisions in helping students improve their comprehension skill by the interventions and strategies that have been put into place. The staff receives updates from their reading coach on best practices for the "Big Five Ideas In Reading". This information is discussed during the data team meetings. During language arts time in the classroom, the teachers have access to Study Island. This web-based program allows students to work on specific standards in which they are weak. Although this intervention could be utilized in a greater capacity, the district is moving in the right direction. Administering the MAP test more than once a year will allow staff to integrate Study Island in a more systematic way throughout the district. The district also conducts a Summer Reading Camp that gives the students another opportunity to increase their comprehension skills. Students qualify for Summer Reading Camp based upon DIBELS and MAP scores as well as teacher input.

Dorchester Public School has many notable practices in place to ensure that students are successfully comprehending in school. The external team thoroughly enjoyed learning about all the things Dorchester does to help kids. The team does see a couple of areas in which Dorchester can continue to improve comprehension in the district. Administering the MAP assessment at least two times a year and utilizing the many resources that NWEA provides can really help Dorchester become even more aware of the needs of their students. The team also feels that the district will find great value in identifying the essential standards of their language arts curriculum. By identifying the essential standards and using those in conjunction with multiple MAP assessments, Dorchester Public School can continue to ensure their students meet the district improvement goals.

III. Successful activities or strategies

- K-5 Data Teams are held each month to review benchmark and progress monitoring data. Decision rules drive conversations.
- Response to Intervention Process - The elementary has an RTI process and plan which includes Tier 1 and Tier 2/pullout. The plan is updated yearly. The secondary level is in the early stages of the RTI process.
- Support for ALL students (subgroups).
- Extensive lists of interventions for students such as:
 - Sound Partners
 - Triumphs
 - Lexia
 - Dibels Deep
 - Study Island
 - STAR Reading Assessment
 - FAME
 - Summer Reading Camp
 - After School Reading Club
 - L to J for vocabulary
 - Junior High Study Skills Class

IV. Recommendations for next steps

- Review and update curriculum to identify essential standards by examining the Nebraska 2014 College and Career Ready ELA standards. Explore methods to measure student performance on the identified essential standards.
- Continue utilizing information from MAP reports to help inform instructional decisions in math and reading. Consider administering MAP up to two times a year for all students to measure student growth and growth towards the reading school improvement goal.
- Revisit lists of interventions to ensure research-based interventions are being implemented consistently across all levels.
 - The group recommends the further development of a systematic Secondary RTI process that utilizes student achievement data and focused interventions for students.

Goal 2

Reviewer's Name: Cheryl Krafka and Suzanne Whisler

I. Goal # 2

All students will improve their math computation skills.

II. Comments about the Student Performance Goal (including goals, assessments, interventions/strategies, and/or staff development)

Throughout the visit, it was evident that Dorchester Public School is working diligently to help all students improve their math computation skills. The district utilizes several sources of data to determine progress towards the math goal. Data sources include MAP, NeSA-M, ACT, Plan, and Explore. In addition, the district has established benchmark goals for each of data sources.

In 2009, the district established their goal of improving math computation skills for all students. Since that time, the district has implemented several programs and interventions to support students. In 2016 enVision Math was adopted in kindergarten through eighth grades. Professional development support was provided for teachers by a company facilitator. In addition, the district utilizes programs such as Otter Creek Math Facts in a Flash, Study Island, and IXL Mathematics as supplements to aide students in developing fluency in math computation. Summer Math Camp for students in grades K-6 and a standards-based math course at the secondary level also provide additional opportunities for students to develop and enhance their math skills.

Currently, the district is working towards expanding their RTI process to include math. In 2016, the RTI Leadership Team and administration worked to revisit and review decision rules in order to identify students who may need Tier 2 math interventions. DIBELS Math is being used to progress monitor students in grades K-1 and MAP for students in grades 2-6. Monthly Math Data meetings are being scheduled to review the data of students who are receiving math interventions at the elementary level.

III. Successful activities or strategies

- Summer Math Camp has been implemented to support students in grades K-6 who are at least one year below grade level. During this time students receive individual and/or small group instruction on specific math concepts.
- The enVision Math program was recently adopted for kindergarten through eighth grade.
- A Standards-Based Math Class has been established at the eleventh grade to help better prepare students to be successful on the NeSA Math assessment.
- An RTI Math Process has begun in the elementary level. DIBELS Math and MAP are being used as progress monitoring tools with students.
- Math supplemental programs have been identified at the elementary and secondary levels. They include:
 - Otter Creek Math Facts in a Flash
 - IXL Mathematics

- Study Island

IV. Recommendations for next steps

- Review and update curriculum to identify essential standards by examining the Nebraska 2015 College and Career Ready Math standards. Explore methods to measure student performance on the identified essential standards.
- Continue utilizing information from MAP reports to help inform instructional decisions throughout the year. Consider administering MAP up to two times a year for all students to measure student growth and growth towards the school improvement goal of math computation.
- Develop conceptual understanding and flexible thinking in students which lead to computational fluency.
 - *Principles of Standards for School Mathematics* states, “Computational fluency refers to having efficient and accurate methods for computing. Students exhibit computational fluency when they demonstrate *flexibility* in the computational methods they choose, *understand* and can explain these methods, and produce accurate answers *efficiently*. The computational methods that a student understands well, including the structure of the base-ten number system, properties of multiplication and division, and number relationships” (p. 152).
- Provide on-going training to K-8 staff for proper implementation of the enVision Math program.
- Offer standards-based math curriculum in all high school math courses.