A. PRINCIPLES

Principals, assistant principals, teachers and other instructional staff are responsible for designing and implementing strategies to reach the educational goals of the board at each school. Input from the school community, including parents, students and representatives from businesses and other agencies, is critical in developing an educational program that will meet the needs of the students and the community.

The board affirms the General Assembly's belief that all children can learn and that the mission of public schools is to challenge, with high expectations, each child to learn, achieve and fulfill his or her potential.

Accordingly, the board has established in its policies, its vision, standards and means of accountability for the educational program. The superintendent shall provide guidance and establish any other standards necessary for effective implementation of the policies. Principals shall lead each school in implementing the policies. The school improvement plan is one tool that school administrators should use to upon the creativity and innovation of the staff and the community. This plan, in its two parts, should identify the school's efforts to improve student performance and reach the educational goals of the board.

B. PART ONE OF THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN: STATE PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The board endorses the principles set forth by the State Board that all children need to master basic skills and knowledge and build upon this foundation for lifelong learning. Therefore, in developing their school improvement plans, all schools should ensure, to the extent possible, that sufficient resources and curriculum are directed towards meeting the goal of having all students performing at grade level or higher in the basic subject and skill areas identified by the State Board.

1. School Improvement Team

   Each school must have a school improvement team that develops the school improvement plan. The school improvement team will consist of the principal, representatives of the assistant principals, instructional personnel, instructional support personnel, teacher assistants and parents of students attending the school. Representatives of each group of school

personnel will be elected by their respective groups by secret ballot. Parents are to be elected in accordance with G.S. 115C-105.27. The school improvement team is encouraged to involve and seek assistance from central office personnel. The school improvement team, especially at the middle and high schools, also is encouraged to seek input from students. The superintendent shall provide guidance to principals to ensure that the principals establish and work together with school improvement teams to develop, review and amend school improvement plans.

The school improvement team will follow all legal requirements in developing and obtaining school approval of the school improvement plan. As a public body, the school improvement team will comply with the Open Meetings Law in regard to its meetings.

2. Mandatory Components of the State Plan

A school improvement plan must include the following components:

a. The plan must specify the effective instructional practices and methods to be used to improve the academic performance of students identified as at-risk of academic failure or at-risk of dropping out of school.

b. The plan must take into consideration the minimum annual performance goal established by the State Board and the goals set out in the mission statement for public schools adopted by the State Board of Education.

c. The plan must be, to the greatest extent possible, data driven. The team shall analyze student data to identify root causes for problems and to determine actions to address them. The plan must contain clear, unambiguous targets, explicit indicators and actual measures, and expeditious time frames for meeting measurement standards.

d. The plan of a school serving students in kindergarten or first grade must determine how to prepare students to read at grade level by the time they enter second grade. The plan also must require that kindergarten and first grade teachers notify parents or guardians when their child is not reading at grade level and is at risk of not

reading at grade level by the time the child enters second grade.

e. The plan must identify how staff development funds allocated to the school will be used.

f. The plan must identify how professional development is clearly matched to the goals and objectives of the safe school plan.

g. The plan must provide a duty-free lunch period for every teacher on a daily basis or as otherwise approved by the school improvement team.

h. The plan must provide ~~a~~ duty-free instructional planning time for every full-time assigned classroom teacher, with the goal of providing an average of at least five hours of planning time per week.

i. As part of the school district's efforts to maintain safe and orderly schools, the school improvement plan must address safety and discipline concerns including any special conditions at the school and any requirements in the local level safe schools plan for school level objectives or strategies. The safe school plan should be integrated into the school improvement plan.

j. In accordance with policy 1310/4002, Parental Involvement, the plan must identify the goals and strategies for parents to be involved in their child's education and the educational program of the school.

k. The plan must include a process by which the school improvement team will review the school improvement plan at least once a year. The annual review process must include (1) a review of student scores on all state and board mandated tests~~.~~ and (2) a means for the school improvement team to modify the plan, if necessary, when the school has not met the expected growth score established by the state.

l. The plan must require the principal to notify the superintendent if the school improvement team has modified a board accepted school improvement plan.

3. Optional Components of the State Plan

Part One of the school improvement plan may include any or all of the following components:

a. a request for waivers of state laws, rules or policies. Any waiver request must identify the particular state law, rule or policy that inhibits the school's ability to improve student performance; set out with specificity the circumstances under which the waiver may be used; and explain how the requested waiver will permit the school to improve student performance.

b. a request to transfer state funds from one allotment category to another, as permitted by state law. The request must identify the funding allotment categories involved in the transfer and identify how the transfer will facilitate improving student performance.

c. a comprehensive conflict resolution plan as provided in G.S. 115C-81(a4), in order to help create a safe school.

d. the use of textbooks that have not been adopted by the State Board.

4. Process

School improvement teams should review student performance data from the preceding school year in developing the school improvement plan. Based upon availability of data and when specific school standards are established by the State Board, the superintendent shall establish the date by which school improvement plans must be submitted.

The superintendent or designee will review the plans and seek legal review as necessary prior to presenting the plans with recommendations to the board. If the superintendent intends to recommend that a plan be rejected, the superintendent shall notify the principal of the school and explain the reasons for the decision. The school improvement team may then submit a modified plan to the superintendent. The superintendent should submit all school improvement plans to the board at the earliest possible date.

After review, the board will accept or reject each school improvement plan.

If a plan is rejected, the board will explain the reason(s) for the rejection. Any plan modified by the school improvement team after being rejected by the board must be submitted to the superintendent for review. The superintendent will re-submit the modified plan to the board with his or her recommendations as soon as practical. The board will review the modifications along with any recommendations from the superintendent and accept or reject the plan.

If the board and the school improvement team cannot reach agreement on the plan within 60 days after its initial submission, the board or school may request to use the dispute resolution process developed by the State Board under G.S. 115C-105.20(b)(5) or, if the dispute resolution process is not utilized, the board may develop a school improvement plan for the school.

A school improvement plan may be in effect for for no more than two ~~up to three~~ years. The plan must be reviewed at least annually by the school improvement team in accordance with the review process established in the school's plan. If a school does not meet its expected growth standard established by the State Board or if more than 25% of the students performed below grade level, the principal must submit to the superintendent and the board a report of the school improvement team. The report must explain the reasons why the standard(s) was not met and describe any modifications that will be made in the school improvement plan. After considering any recommendations of the superintendent, if the board is not satisfied with the response of the school improvement team, the board may suggest modifications to the plan or may vacate those portions of the plan that impede student performance and require the school improvement team to revise the plan.

C. PART TWO OF THE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN: LOCAL EDUCATION REFORM INITIATIVES

In addition to the basics emphasized in the state testing program, the board expects schools to be guided by the educational goals of the board. The board encourages the schools to consider innovative means of educating students to meet these educational goals. The board has established a vision, standards and means of accountability in its educational policies to provide guidance to the schools. Many of these policies provide an opportunity for schools to develop innovative plans as a part of their school improvement plan. Part two of the school improvement plan should reflect the school's efforts to meet the

educational goals of the board.

1. Mandatory Components of the Local Plan

   Part Two of the school improvement plan must include the following:

   a. strategies for meeting the educational objectives of the board (policy 3000, Goals and Objectives of the Educational Program):.

   b. intervention strategies for students who are not at grade level proficiency or who are not likely to meet standards of promotion measured by other means (Student Progression and Placement, policy 3420)

2. Optional Components of the Local Plan

   The board strongly encourages school employees to be innovative in their efforts to meet local educational goals.
   Although not limited to these options, the board has encouraged innovation specifically through its policies on the following issues:

   a. modifying the school calendar (so long as there are at least 180 days of instruction; policy 3300, School Calendar and Time for Learning);

   b. implementing alternative scheduling of classes or other strategies intended to reduce transitional time and limit interference from non-instructional activities (policy 3300);

   c. adding hours of instructional time (policy 3300);

   d. providing additional means for evaluating instructional programs policy 3140,(Evaluation of Instructional Programs);

   e. developing and implementing pilot programs (policy 3110, Innovation in Curriculum and Instruction);

   f. expanding the subject areas or objectives of the curriculum (policy 3100, Innovation in Curriculum Development); and

   g. eliminating ~~curriculum~~ curricula on subject areas or objectives that are not state required. (policy 3100).

A school also may submit a request to the board for a waiver of board policies. Any waiver request must identify the particular board policy that inhibits the school's ability to improve student performance; set out with specificity the circumstances under which the waiver may be used; and explain how the requested waiver will permit the school to improve student performance.

3. Process

Part Two of the plan should be submitted at the same time as Part One of the plan. However, a school improvement team may submit a request to the superintendent for an additional month to complete Part Two of the plan. The superintendent may approve the request if the school is working in good faith to complete the plan.

The board will act on the plan at the first meeting in which it is presented, unless further time for review is necessary. The board may accept the plan with or without modifications or reject the plan, providing an explanation of the deficiencies of the plan. If modifications are required for board approval, the board may either make the modifications or request that the school improvement team ~~to~~ make modifications and resubmit the plan.

If a school improvement team is not satisfied with any modifications made by the board, it may submit alternative modifications for consideration to the board. Until the board acts on the school improvement team's alternative modifications, the modifications made by the board will be in effect.

~~The~~ Part Two of the plan may be in effect for no more than two ~~up to three~~ years. The board encourages the school to evaluate the plan continually. At any time during the ~~three~~ two year period, a school improvement team may submit an expanded or modified school improvement plan for board consideration. Furthermore, at any time during the ~~three~~ two year period, the superintendent and the board may review the plan and the board may take any actions provided in this subsection.

D. STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The superintendent shall develop a process by which schools can learn from

~~each other's~~ other schools' improvement plans. The superintendent and the schools are encouraged to use staff development resources to provide training to staff on the development, implementation and evaluation of school improvement plans.

School administrators must be evaluated by their supervisors on the school-based management process as required by board policy and state law and on the effectiveness of the school improvement plan.

Legal References: G.S. 115C - 47(38), -81, -84.2, 98, 105.21, -105.25, -105.26, -105.27, -105.32, -105.35, -105.47 -301.1;143, art. 33C

Cross References: Parental Involvement (policy 1310/4002), Goals and Objectives of the Educational Program (policy 3000), Curriculum Development (policy 3100), Innovation in Curriculum and Instruction (policy 3110), Evaluation of Instructional Programs (policy 3140), School Calendar and Time for Learning (policy 3300), Student Progression and Placement (policy 3420)

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