

New York State Education Department
Contract For Excellence
2008-09 Needs and Strategies Report

WAPPINGERS CSD

SUPERINTENDENT RICHARD POWELL

Achievement Issues : Describe the overall student achievement need presenting the greatest challenge in your school district which the Contract for Excellence addresses. In particular, describe the needs for those schools in improvement status that qualified your district for the Contract for Excellence.

The Wappingers Central School District includes two Junior High Schools (Wappingers Jr. High and Van Wyck Jr. High) which are considered SRAP schools (Year 2). The 2005-06 School Report Card shows that students at Wappingers Jr High School were all making AYP in Mathematics and Science, and all students, except students with disabilities, were making AYP in English Language Arts. Students at Van Wyck Jr High School were all making AYP in Mathematics and Science, and all students, except students with disabilities, were making AYP in English Language Arts. These students are now high school students and continue to need intervention services. The 2007-08 School Report Card indicates that our junior high students at both Wappingers Junior High School and Van Wyck Junior High School are all now making AYP, using the Safe Harbor targets for Students with Disabilities in English Language Arts only. We believe this is due to the implementation of programs funded last year with C4E. Not surprisingly, it is the high school population which has most recently been identified as failing to meet standards. These are the students who did not meet them in junior high and have now moved on to high school. John Jay High School students with disabilities did not meet AYP nor did they meet the criterion for participation in ELA or math. Continuing our efforts into the high schools is expected to help those students from the non-achieving junior high years as well as bolster the achievements of students now entering their high school years.

Contract Plan : Describe the overall strategy your district will implement under the Contract for Excellence to address the above needs. Detail the new and innovative programs selected and how they will integrate with existing improvement plans.

Major issues identified for WCSD are: a) the majority of failures are at the 9th grade level; b) classified students have been discouraged from taking the required exams; c) black and Latino students from a residential juvenile facility in the district feel no connection to their school community, and d) students drop out because they cannot earn the required 4 credits for ELA and Social Studies in 4 years. Our C4E plan is to provide students with a solid foundation in literacy in the elementary years, provide multiple opportunities to pass ELA and Social Studies from the first year of high school, provide support for classified students in all areas, and create opportunity for positive experiences for transient students. To accomplish this:

1. A summer school program for students in grades 8 -9 was created and implemented in July 2008 to remediate those who failed ninth grade and to prepare 8th graders *at-risk* of academic failure for entry into high school. Six classes in ELA and Social Studies (using ELA strategies) will be offered at each grade level with class sizes limited to 15 students.
2. Ninth graders will be assigned to *teams* at both high schools. Additional SpEd teachers and Guidance Counselors will be added to the teams to provide support for students, with a special emphasis on those in the targeted populations. Teams will follow an inclusion model, provide a new non-lab science course, and allow teachers to track student progress, discuss intervention strategies during a common planning period, provide AIS, and take immediate intervention steps as necessary. A *team* spirit will enable students to identify with and be part of a community.
3. An alternative 9th grade (small learning community) will be initiated in 2008-09 with smaller teacher-to-student ratios (15:1), a later start time, and a block schedule. This program will be held at a location away from the 2000+ student high schools to minimize the distractions these teens have faced every day, such as gang disputes, drug availability, and bullying. All students who have difficulty with transitions, large group instruction, or more traditional programs will be given the option to be included in the alternative 9th grade, providing them with a safe setting in which they will be held accountable and given the support needed to be successful.

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4. The intensity and variety of Academic Intervention Services for high school students will be increased by adding supplemental classes in these subjects taught as a "lab" attached to their main course. The same teacher will teach both the main class and the "lab" so that instruction can be adjusted or expanded to provide differentiated and targeted interventions that are applicable to the individual student.

5. Additional sections will be created in elementary schools to reduce the student to teacher ratio. Additional teaching assistants will supervise small pull-out groups as needed. These types of interventions will provide students with a solid academic base and allow teachers to intervene before a problem becomes a stumbling block to success.

6. Reading specialists will be added to the high school staff. A Reading Camp was held during the summer 2008 to give elementary students additional time on task and provide a solid foundation in literacy.

7. Some classified high school students will be given the opportunity to participate in a School-to-Work program. Students work with a mentor/advisor who supervises them on a job site that works cooperatively with the school. The students' supervisor also monitors and provides support for student academic progress. An emphasis on classified students' participation in the exams will be a focus and goal for all secondary schools as well.

Special Populations : The needs of special populations (LEP, students with disabilities, poverty and students with low achievement) should be assessed, with specific programmatic efforts identified.

Although there is an insufficient number of students in each of the high schools individually to determine AYP status for that school, the total number of high school students in the district who fall into one of three categories did not make AYP in English Language Arts per the 2007-08 District Report Card: Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and Students with Disabilities. These same groups also failed to meet the criterion for participation rate. Secondary students as a total group are not making AYP in Mathematics in the following categories: Black or African American, and Students with Disabilities. These same groups also failed to meet the criterion for participation rate. Limited English Proficient students in elementary and middle school did not make AYP in English Language Arts. Students with disabilities at the elementary and middle school levels made AYP in English Language Arts only using the "Safe Harbor" target. Students from these subgroups as well as those individuals in other subgroups who failed to meet state standards, are considered as "students with the greatest educational needs". We don't feel we can or should ignore the white male non-classified student from a middle-class family (for example) who is failing just because he doesn't "fit" into one of the targeted subgroups. Therefore, our plan is more global and district-wide, and intends to catch every single student who is not achieving the NYS standards.

Targeting to Need : Provide evidence that funds are targeted to students with the greatest educational needs. Refer to the Educational Need Matrix e-mailed to each superintendent.

Programs targeting the junior high schools based on last year's C4E analysis have been very successful in helping those schools meet AYP. Elementary schools feeding into the junior high schools, as well as the high schools receiving students from the junior high schools were targeted (along with these junior high schools) for the coming year to provide a district-wide initiative for reform. The program implemented in 2007-08 has a strong AIS and early intervention programs, and uses literacy coaches, differentiated instruction, seamless integration of Special Education with Regular Education, staff development in intervention strategies, technology integration, character education, critical thinking and reading/writing across all content areas. This year's focus on the high school populations will concentrate on providing AIS to students at risk, which will include all of the sub-populations mentioned above. We will also be addressing the social needs of these students in an effort to draw them in to the school community and motivate them to succeed in school. Recognizing that the problem does not suddenly appear and disappear just because a student enters or

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leaves junior high school, it is essential to take a global approach instead of just concentrating on the subgroup and grade level(s) identified on the state report card as the reason AYP was not met. As a result, we will be focusing our attention and new C4E resources on the secondary schools for the 2008-09 school year as part of a district-wide reform initiative. A task force on special education has been hard at work and given suggestions on improving the structure of our special education program. Although there is very little cost associated with this re-organization (the ¿what¿), it will positively impact the way services are provided to classified students (the ¿how¿) and fit seamlessly into the new C4E programs described above.

Performance Targets : You will need to complete a detailed Performance Matrix in the application that will capture the specific gap reduction you expect in each school with C4E funds for specific accountability areas and subgroups of students. In this narrative, describe the overall achievement outcomes that you anticipate will result from the C4E programs.

We anticipate that focusing our efforts on the students in 9th grade will reduce the number of failures at that level and boost the number of students who persevere to graduation. We also anticipate that our efforts to provide a smaller environment will encourage those in the subpopulations to feel safe and supported and increase their academic achievement and participation as well. The addition of reading support at the high school, additional guidance counselors, individualized and new types of academic intervention services at all levels, increased time on task through a summer school program, smaller learning communities, and greater teacher accountability for student success through teaming are all expected to raise the level of student achievement so that all subgroups meet AYP in 2008-09.

Maintenance of Effort : Describe how you will continue your previous year's C4E program expenditures. Explain any reductions in expenditures that will be reallocated as part of this year's contract.

In 2007-08 we initiated the following new programs: Additional time on task in ELA and Math (extra classes every other day) at Van Wyck Jr. High School, a guidance counselor for the 6th grades, literacy coaches for the elementary and junior high schools, an ELA coordinator for the elementary and junior high schools, reducing class sizes by renovating existing space for use as classrooms, and hiring new staff. Some existing programs were expanded and improved, such as the alternative high school, the ELA and Math AIS classes at Wappingers Jr. High School, and an expanded summer math camp. All of these programs are still in place for the 2008-09 school year and will be continued into the future because they have been so effective in raising the level of student achievement. There have been no reductions in expenditures that were reallocated as part of this year¿s contract.

New vs. Continuation of Existing Programs : Describe how funds will supplement and not supplant current programs, except where allowed.

New programs this year are the 9th Grade Teaming approach that includes new ¿lab¿ classes for additional time in the core subject areas, the 8th-9th grade summer school, the elementary summer reading ¿camp¿, providing a reading teacher and reading program in the high schools, offering a School-to-Work program for the lower-ability classified students, and adding 9th grade classes at the Alternative High School. None of the above programs, the staffing for these programs, the materials for these programs, or the curriculum for these programs have been in existence prior to the 2008-09 school year. These are brand new ideas and initiatives for the Wappingers Central School district. The increase in C4E funding will be applied toward these initiatives. Money for previous programs has been budgeted and will not be taken from C4E funding for new programs.