

Areas of Strength and Recommendations for Growth

STUDENT PERFORMANCE—AREAS OF STRENGTH

1. Administrators and teachers acknowledge the importance of the use of rubrics as a tool for advancing critical thinking about learning.
2. Teachers and administrators district-wide consider the use of writing portfolios as an important tool for fostering student self-reflection.
3. District-wide, students are engaged in a variety of performance-based authentic assessments that provide them with opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge and abilities. Students have a choice in selecting the mode of expression or topic. Authentic assessments.
4. Performance-based demonstrations of student writing are in place across the content areas in grades K-12, including world languages, science, social studies, music and art.
5. The Assistant Superintendent gathers and distributes data to building administrators and the leadership team. The Handbook of Useful Data is designed to support the analysis of the data connected to standardized test scores. Teachers recognize and value the data reporting.
6. The Assistant Superintendent monitors and analyses ELA longitudinal data and shares data with the Board of Education and the Superintendent
7. The Assistant Superintendent focused on one cohort of students using data from Grades 4, 8, 9-12.
8. The district has developed a standards-based report card for grades K-5.
9. A Kindergarten screening and assessment model is used to identify students in need of early intervention.
10. There is evidence of improvement in ELA test scores at the Title One elementary schools.
11. In some of the writing portfolios, there is evidence of student self-reflection, self-assessment and peer evaluation which are linked to critical analysis and higher level achievement.
12. In the K-5 literacy program, the introduction of a balance literacy model has created more student engagement in their learning process.
13. Guidance counselors have developed a plan that includes a workshop for parents and students explaining the college application process. An opportunity is provided for parents and students to meet with Guidance Counselors to discuss the application and to explore college choices. Pamphlets, brochures and time lines are provided to the students and parents outlining the scholarship and college application processes. Students are provided with an opportunity to meet with former HS students in a round table discussion to share thoughts/concerns about the first year of college.

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STUDENT PERFORMANCE—AREAS OF STRENGTH (CONTINUED)

14. The district celebrates students' college acceptances with the community via the district Web site and the high school marquees. Press releases celebrate post graduate successes.
15. The graduation rate in the class of 2006 increased due, in part, to the establishment of the Alternative High School. Intervention by the AHS Guidance Counselor has provided needed and meaningful support for at risk students.
16. The rate of college acceptances increased for the class of 2006. Forty-five percent of students attended two-year colleges and 45 % attended 4year colleges.
17. Special education and ESL policies and procedures are planned and documented for effective implementation.
18. Specific high school programs, such as STARS for students in grade 9, the Alternative High School for grades 10 through 12, and PM School for grades 11 and 12 recognize and respond to student needs. STARS and Project SEA at the high schools keep at-risk students in school.
19. K-12 character education programs have mobilized community resources/awareness to build self-esteem and help students access a safe and secure environment for learning.

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STUDENT PERFORMANCE—RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GROWTH

1. Clearly define balanced literacy to ensure that all students and teachers on the K-5 level have a common understanding of the purpose and procedures of this approach. Provide sufficient coaching to ensure consistent quality implementation of balanced literacy.
2. Consider adopting common performance-based assessment tools and assured experiences aligned with student performance goals at grade levels K-12.
3. Consider developing a process to design consistent K-12 benchmarks and assessment tools for reading and writing to establish grade level student performance expectations. Collaborate to revisit and revise these benchmarks based upon district goals. Develop a process to connect the benchmarks and teacher-developed rubrics to specific and agreed upon performance assessments. Use these benchmarks to align instructional practices and assessment of student performance to drive future instructional changes to improve student growth over time
4. Develop a systemic process for using data to inform instruction. Create a purposeful, clear method and process to select data for analysis. Identify data from multiple sources (including portfolios, anecdotal records, DRA's, performance assessments) in addition to standardized and state assessments and use them to guide curriculum, instruction, supervision and evaluation. Provide all teachers with access to data they need to inform instruction, evaluate program and set and monitor professional goals and outcomes. Provide structures for teachers and administrators to collaborate and reflect on data.
5. Develop a structure for the collection, analysis and longitudinal use of district assessment data to monitor cohorts using focused information from district and standardized tests to identify trends. Use this longitudinal data to assist in determining the effectiveness of current programs.
6. Consider the systemic implementation of the K-12 writing portfolio process that includes common purpose and protocol in order to achieve the district's goals for critical thinking. Use these portfolios to track student progress over time and to serve as a vehicle for student reflection and growth.
7. Establish a consistent understanding of the distinction between rubrics and task lists and establish definitions and models for rubrics.
8. Compile exemplars of student work to illustrate the expectations for the performance levels on common rubrics.
9. Analyze needs across district to advise equitable distribution of instructional and support resources.
10. Equitable services for students of all skill levels including gifted and talented students should be available in all schools.

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STUDENT PERFORMANCE—RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GROWTH (CONTINUED)

11. Teachers should be trained to access student data base on assessment information to help differentiate instruction.
12. Define a more comprehensive model to engage students in the process of self-assessment, self-reflection and goal setting.
13. Consider implementing a developmental guidance program and reducing counselor ratio to enable guidance counselors to provide a wider range of support services across grades.
14. Develop a senior exit survey to evaluate and analyze the strengths and weaknesses of guidance programs and services and as a basis of program improvement planning.
15. As part of continuous improvement planning, formulate a process to gather information from graduates about their preparation and success in college or career.
16. Develop a process that high school students know and understand that they can request a review for placement in Honors' classes.

Areas of Strength and Recommendations for Growth

INTERNAL SUPPORT—AREAS OF STRENGTH

1. Multiple sources of assessment data are used in grades K-3 to drive instructional decisions to improve student work. Examples include running records, DRA's, QRI's, and ELA test results.
2. The middle and high schools integrate ELA standards across disciplines. The middle schools are working to accomplish this by incorporating writing into a variety of content areas.
3. Administrators are aware of the value of the results of the district surveys for parents, teachers, and students for identifying perceived strengths and needs.
4. The district offers a wide range of professional development opportunities, many of them related to ELA.
5. District developed an effective professional development program for introducing Thinking Maps across the district. Thinking Maps K-12 provide a framework, shared vision and common language to build upon.
6. The district literacy coach has begun to provide support in the development of a comprehensive literacy program.
7. The district has begun to develop learning communities and study groups.
8. The district's K-12 technology initiative provides teachers with innovative ways to integrate technology into instructional and assessment practices.
9. The technology department provides a multifaceted approach to disaggregating student performance data and tailors this data to the needs of individual schools as requested.
10. The school culture at grades K-5 supports and encourages teacher innovation and creativity by giving them the freedom to explore new ideas and best practices. Examples include the Mount St. Mary's literacy program, and the teacher-student mentoring program.
11. The coordinator of music and art K-12 is committed to creating links between ELA and instruction in special area subjects to enhance literacy instruction.
12. The district has developed a comprehensive, multi-faceted Master Plan that covers building, renovation and education.
13. Structures are in place for teachers to collaborate at grade, school, and district levels. There is evidence of curriculum coordination at building levels K-12. Elementary teachers collaborate before, during, and after school, and have formed learning communities). The creation of a K-5 Literacy Committee also provides opportunities to collaborate on curriculum development.
14. K-12 ELA curriculum guides aligned with NY State Standards have been developed and distributed.

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INTERNAL SUPPORT—AREAS OF STRENGTH (CONTINUED)

15. The district has made a commitment to allocate resources to increase coordination and staffing in support of long term goals.
16. A central data warehouse identifies students' needs and reports information to principals and teachers to help inform programming.
17. Extensive referral processes are available to access necessary support for students' needs.
18. The district and the community have provided extensive opportunities to develop and implement character education programs to meet the social and emotional needs of students.
19. Many demographic groups in the community are valued and welcomed in the schools to enhance and support the learning environment.
20. Programs have been implemented to encourage children to develop empathy and understanding of community needs.
21. Enrichment opportunities in the arts are prevalent.
22. Additional funds have been budgeted for AIS.

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INTERNAL SUPPORT—RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GROWTH

1. Consider establishing a K-12 ELA committee tasked with insuring curriculum coherence.
2. Develop.
3. Develop a long range professional development plan to support the ELA program. Implement a teacher professional development and evaluation model that includes the use of student learning data to identify goals and assess effectiveness. Provide sufficient resources to implement this plan.
4. Institute “Learning Walks” as a non-evaluative way to gather data and provide specific feedback to teachers that is relevant to the instructional program.
5. Provide additional literacy coaches to continue to build strong literacy skills throughout the district.
6. Provide additional, job embedded, professional development for the implementation of best practices in ELA and in critical thinking.
7. Continue to provide flexible structures to support collaboration and communication among teachers as they work to develop ELA practices.
8. Consider creating a more systematic approach to communicating and identifying methods to analyze data in order to effectively guide teaching and learning practices throughout the district.
9. Collaboratively develop a district-wide plan to share best practices and new ideas so that they can be systemic and sustained to improve student learning over time.
10. In order to continue to build the capacity to use Thinking Maps in classrooms develop a way to examine and draw conclusions about expanding their application across all content areas. Create common assessments to determine the extent to which Thinking Maps are actively improving student learning, especially critical thinking and problem solving, over time.
11. A district-wide vision statement linked to student performance should be written and implemented throughout the school district. The ELA vision should be aligned with it. Create long-term measurable goals for student performance in reading and writing K-12, and yearly measurable assessments to achieve these goals, beyond state assessment results. Instruction and assessment need to be aligned vertically and horizontally with agreed-upon K-12 student performance outcomes.
12. Develop transition programs for general and special education students from elementary to middle school and middle to high school.
13. Re-evaluate the assignment of credit for AIS students at the high school.

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INTERNAL SUPPORT—RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GROWTH (CONTINUED)

14. More mental health educators, including social workers, counselors, and psychologists, are needed to support students' academic achievement including in ELA.
15. More equitable opportunities for gifted and talented students should be added in each building.
16. Direct professional development opportunities to enhance higher level thinking and learning for students at all levels of needs.
17. Provide systematic opportunities for teachers of special needs students (SPED, alternative HS, etc.) to meet on a regular basis with their regular education colleagues to collaborate on best instructional practices

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EXTERNAL SUPPORT—AREAS OF STRENGTH

1. Communication regarding literacy programs and curriculum information is consistently carried out using a variety of media on a regular basis.
2. Elementary school programs invite various community and parent groups into the schools as mentors and presenters.
3. Student awards and school and district achievements are published by local news media to recognize literacy accomplishments
4. Information on all phases about the budget process is clearly communicated to parents and community.
5. The district's adoption of the use of Thinking Maps at all levels has been clearly communicated to the school community.
6. Commitment to ELA is demonstrated in the recoding of the balanced literacy specialist from the Title I grant to the 2007-2008 proposed budget. Title I monies will be shifted to fund two additional reading specialists who will provide added support to students. This change has been communicated in the budget documents.
7. There is evidence of a district commitment to staff development as reflected by a \$40,000 budget allocation for 2007-08 in professional development activities. This is an increase in funding from past years.
8. The school district has reached out to the community via a variety of communication methods to inform them about the proposed budget and the bond issue for land purchase. These communication methods include use of the district Web site, television, CDs, taped presentations, and print media.
9. The Superintendents budget for 2007-08 contains funding for:
 - A new primary grade early intervention program.
 - Additional AIS support
 - K-12 ELA coordinator
 - Continued training in Thinking Maps
 - Tri-State participation
 - Smart Board use to support ELA instruction.

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EXTERNAL SUPPORT—RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GROWTH

1. Develop and adequately fund leadership positions that allow for focus on and support of rigorous curriculum, instruction and assessment practices. A priority is the position of Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction.
2. Provide more structured, consistent and systemic opportunities for two-way communication between teachers and parents to discuss students' growth in literacy.
3. Inform parents more effectively of the district's ELA goals and how their children's performance reflects progress towards mastery of these goals.
4. Develop a calendar that includes regular invitations for parents to observe and participate in their student's ELA learning experiences.
5. Review the current opportunities for parent-teacher conversations with the intent of ensuring a more consistent process of discussing student performance on a district-wide basis.
6. The district professional development plan should address opportunities designed to the strengthen teacher preparedness in meeting district goals for improved student achievement. The district budget should be linked to this plan and provide adequate funding to meet the goals of the district and the professional development plan. Use district publications to educate the community regarding the link between teacher training and student achievement. This can serve to build support for increasing the budget for professional development opportunities.
7. The budget should be designed to ensure access and equity for all students in all schools. Established programs in select schools, such as the AWARDS program, special education inclusion programs, ELL programs, and the use of a literacy coach and enrichment teachers, should be implemented in all schools in the district.
8. A Joint Council of PTA's might help to align programs and the equity of resources amongst the elementary schools.
9. Many districts have Educational Foundations, established to support teacher endeavors that can not be funded through the regular operating budget. Consider reaching out to community members to discuss the formation of such an organization. A foundation may be able to assist in financially supporting teacher initiatives as well as brining equity to schools with fewer community resources (i.e. supporting student field trips).
10. Support services are vital to students' social, emotional and academic success. Funding for increased staffing in the areas of social workers, guidance counselors, and psychologists will reduce student-teacher ratios in these disciplines and allow the professionals to address student issues and concerns that they are unable to address because of their large caseloads.

Areas of Strength and Recommendations for Growth

EXTERNAL SUPPORT—RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GROWTH (CONTINUED)

11. Support the educational initiatives of the district with necessary materials, supplies and equipment. To ensure equity, this may necessitate redeployment of funding to schools in the district that are needier than others.