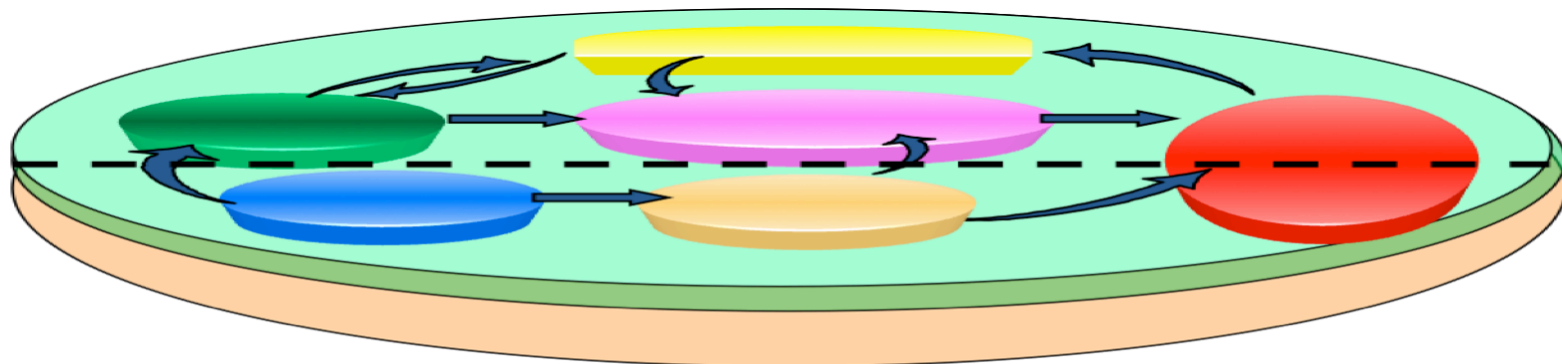


Field Park School System Assessment Feedback Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT

The following system assessment feedback report was developed for Field Park School, Western Springs District 101, by the System Assessment Review Team of the Consortium for Educational Change.

Using the best practice criteria of a correlation between the Baldrige Performance Excellence Education Criteria and the Characteristics of Professional Learning Communities as a lens, the System Assessment Review Team reviewed information provided by the school and interviewed administrators, faculty, staff, students, and parents in order to identify strengths and opportunities for school-wide system improvement.



This feedback report was developed reflecting on the indicators described on the next few pages. It is a response to written information provided by the school as well as from information gathered from interviews. It is not intended to represent the perspective of all school administrators, faculty, staff, students, and parents. Its accuracy is dependent on the information presented and discussed by the External Review Team.

The criteria around which we conducted our visit are listed below. It is a synthesis of the research from the Baldrige Performance Excellence Criteria, the Correlates of Effective Schools, the Characteristics of Professional Learning Communities, and Standard Bearer. They represent the four best practice, continuous improvement frameworks. This school uses the Professional Learning Community Framework as the format.

Focus on Learning: We acknowledge that the fundamental purpose of our school is to help all students achieve high levels of learning and therefore we are willing to examine all of our practices in light of their impact on learning.	
<i>A Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum</i>	
A.	We set student learning expectations for staff to build shared knowledge regarding common core state standards, district curriculum guides, trends in student achievement, and expectations for the next course or grade. This collective inquiry enables each staff member across a grade or department to clarify what all students must know and be able to do as a result of every unit of instruction. The curriculum is horizontally and vertically aligned.
B.	We expect that each teacher give priority to the identified essential learning targets in every unit of instruction to guarantee that each student has equal access to those learning targets in all classrooms for the grade level or course. Text and other resources are aligned to the essential learning targets. Pacing guides identify what should be taught during each grading period.
C.	We expect that every teacher is able to assist each student and their parents (families) know the essential learning targets so they can assist in monitoring performance in relationship to those targets.
<i>Formative and Summative System of Assessments</i>	
D.	We ensure there is a balance between common, formative assessment data to guide instruction and learning; and common, summative assessment data to reflect on teaching, programs, interventions, and periodic student progress reporting.
E.	We ensure there is frequent and timely feedback regarding the performance of our students on team, school, district, and state assessments.
F.	We expect each teacher to monitor the learning of each student on all common essential learning targets on a timely basis through a series of district-developed and/or school/team-developed common assessments that identify what each student knows and needs to learn next.
G.	We expect teachers to use assessment data aligned to the student learning targets to differentiate instruction and respond to students when they demonstrate they have not learned or have learned and are ready for more challenge.
H.	We regularly recognize and celebrate individual and collective student growth, mastery, and success aligned to goal accomplishments.
<i>School-Wide Systematic Interventions and Enrichments</i>	

I.	We expect Instructional activities are engaging and differentiated to meet individual and small group needs within the classroom.
J.	We ensure a system of interventions that guarantees each student will receive additional time and support for learning if he/she has not demonstrated mastery of grade level or course essential learning targets.
K.	We ensure that students are required rather than invited to devote the extra time and receive the additional support until they are successful in their learning
L.	We ensure teachers extend and enrich the learning of students who have mastered common essential learning targets so every student is challenged.
M.	We ensure staff has sufficient training and follow-up support to address the needs of all student subgroups through Response to Intervention systems.
<i>Examine Policies and Procedures To Ensure a Focus on Learning</i>	
N.	We expect all teachers to have a thorough knowledge of their subject matter, possess expertise in a wide range of effective instructional strategies, and demonstrate commitment to closing achievement gaps.
O.	We expect the learning environment of the school to be safe, respectful, engaging, and support a climate of high expectations for all students to be successful learners.
P.	We provide opportunities for teachers to examine homework, grading, discipline, recognition, etc. to ensure systematic and systemic implementation that supports and encourages learning.
Q.	We expect all teachers to clarify the criteria by which they will judge the quality of student work, and practice applying those criteria until they can do so consistently.
R.	We provide sufficient training and follow-up support to assist teachers with expectations in the alignment of essential learning targets, assessments, and instruction.
S.	We organize resources of people, time and money with a focus on learning as opposed to a focus on teaching.

Focus on Collaboration: We are committed to working together to achieve our collective purpose of learning for all students. We cultivate a collaborative culture through the development of high performing teams.

Building Shared Knowledge and Leadership: Mission, Vision, Values, and Goals

A.	We have developed and deployed mission, vision, values (collective commitments) and goals to set clear direction. There is a process in place for school-wide improvement planning. The school improvement plan is focused on refining teaching practices to improve student learning. Action plans describe the steps to be taken toward attainment of goals.
B.	We expect that behaviors and actions of all staff support the vision, mission, values, and goals of both the school and the district. The improvement plan is put into action with fidelity.
C.	We set clear direction and communicate a "Big Picture" so that everyone sees how current and new initiatives connects to that direction and how those initiatives align with district direction. Everyone understands how this/her work contributes to school improvement.

High Performing, Collaborative Teams

D.	We expect work to be done through collaborative teams in which members work together interdependently to achieve common goals. We have developed and adhere to team norms in conducting our work.
E.	We provide time during the contractual day and school year for teams to meet. We support both vertical and horizontal team collaboration. We address transition and articulation from elementary to middle to high and beyond.
F.	We expect teams to be accountable for the decisions they make. Teams expect all students to make substantial learning growth each year. Teams expect all students to express confidence in their ability to grow and improve each year. Teams monitor and report student learning results and make adjustments when appropriate. Structures and processes are in place for shared decision-making.
G.	We provide sufficient training and follow-up support for team members to have the skills, tools, and strategies to make teamwork efficient and effective. We monitor and report team effectiveness and efficiency on a regularly scheduled basis.

Creating Intentional Collaboration

H.	We promote a culture/teaching environment of personal growth and high performance. Extensive communication and collaboration ensures that all stakeholders are a part of the decision-making process. There is evidence of a high level of trust, respect and morale throughout the school community.
I.	We create a safe environment to report and compare data so as to learn from one another and share best practices. We promote collaboration rather than competition. The school recognizes and celebrates individual, team, and school success aligned to its goals. There is evidence that staff satisfaction is high.
J.	We expect that team time to be used engage in collective inquiry on questions specifically linked to gains in student achievement. Each team is called upon to generate and submit products, which result from its work on its goals and targets related to student learning. Our work and the work of teams are focused on the four PLC questions.
K.	We ensure professional development is job-embedded and ongoing. It explicitly addresses the needs of staff and is focus on assisting staff to improve students' learning results. It has adequate resources, reflecting that ongoing, job-embedded professional development is a district priority.
<i>Fostering Strong Partnerships</i>	
L.	We foster collaborative partnerships between and among the district office and all schools to ensure decisions are made in the best interests of students.
M.	We foster a two-way communication system between and among the district office and all other schools that includes an exchange of essential information and feedback related to that information.
N.	We foster collaborative partnerships with parents (families) and the community to engage them in decisions about the progress of school, school and student goal attainment. There is evidence that parent (family) satisfaction is high.
O.	We foster a two-way communication system with parents (families) and the community that includes an exchange of essential information and feedback related to that information.
<i>Examine Policies and Procedures To Ensure a Focus on Collaboration</i>	
P.	We enforce district job expectations and provide meaningful evaluation systems so that each employee can self-assess as well as receive supervisory assessment of their strengths and opportunities for improvement in relation to district expectations. The evaluation system addresses new state and federal requirements.
Q.	We organize and allocate resources of people, time and money with a focus on collaboration.

Focus on Results: We assess our effectiveness on the basis of results rather than intentions. Individuals, teams and schools seek relevant data and information and use that information to promote continuous improvement.	
<i>Developing SMART Goals</i>	
A.	School, team, and individual staff goals are specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and timely (SMART). They address gaps identified through key data sources that focus improvement efforts.
B.	The school improvement plan and process serves as the centerpiece for examining how the school performs in comparison to district and state requirements.
C.	We align key data indicators and measures throughout the system—district to school to team/department/ to individual--- throughout the use of a systematic reporting system. The school's improvement plan goals align to the key data indicators and measures where performance is below expectations or requirements.
D.	Administrative performance goals align with district and/or school improvement plan and related SMART goals
E.	Teacher performance goals align with district, school, and/or team improvement plan and related SMART goals.
F.	Student performance goals align with assessment data and information that defines what they need to learn next (Common Core State Standards).
<i>Creating a Results Orientation</i>	
We expect all staff to use assessment data to: a) identify students who need additional time and support for learning; b) discover strengths and weaknesses in their own job performance; c) measure and report progress toward goals, and d) define action plans.	
H.	We create a safe data culture so students and staff feel comfortable sharing their results in an effort to learn from others;
I.	We view, monitor, and report progress to all stakeholders on a regular basis to identify what to celebrate and what to focus on next in terms of improvement.

J.	We expect staff to assist students take responsibility for their own learning by collecting data to monitor and track their performance compared to high expectations and performance results of others.
K.	All students know where they are in the progression of steps to meet their learning targets and what evidence will be required to demonstrate mastery of the next step.
L.	We collect, analyze, prioritize, and act upon student, parent, and staff satisfaction data to be certain it is addressing the needs and requirements of our stakeholders.
<i>Improving Results</i>	
M.	We have evidence to show our trend achievement results are improving compared to the past. Our achievement results include measures of growth.
N.	We have evidence to show our student cohort achievement results are improving from grade to grade. Our achievement results include measures of growth.
O.	We have evidence to show our achievement results are improving compared to others (state and other benchmark schools).
P.	We have evidence to show our results have narrowed or closed achievement gaps between groups of students.
Q.	Our school meets adequate yearly progress requirements as defined by federal and state legislation. Our students are ready for the next level (elementary to middle, middle to high school, high school to college/career readiness).
<i>Examine Policies and Procedures To Ensure a Focus on Results</i>	
R.	We examine policies and processes related to data collection, management and analysis to be certain they are effective and efficient. Data is easily accessible and user-friendly in its format.
S.	We benchmark our performance against similar and high performing schools.
T.	We organize and allocate our resources of people, time and money with a focus on results.

SYSTEM ASSESSMENT SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES:

The school responded to a set of questions aligned to the three areas listed above. The External Review Team reviewed the Professional Learning Community effective practices and identified school strengths and opportunities for improvement. They school self-assessed itself as to where they viewed their progress toward the criteria. The purpose of the visit was to provide the school with gap information in areas where the external review team did not agree with the self-assessment.

The External Review Team examined the information and data prior to the site visit. They developed a list of questions to explore as part of the site visit. The External Review Team interviewed all stakeholder groups.

On the first day the team interviewed:

- Principal
- Team Leaders, Union Representatives & PTO Leaders
- Instructional Support Staff, Non-Instructional Support Staff & PE/Fine Arts/Spanish
- Problem-Solving Team, Intervention/Enrichment, & Technology
- School Self-Assessment Team

On the second day, the team interviewed:

- Parents
- Students
- Teachers
- OT/PT/Speech Teachers
- Classroom visits

Schedules were set by the school with guidelines that representatives interviewed should reflect the demographics of the school. Approximately 80 stakeholders were interviewed.

Following interviews, the External Review Team reviewed its findings and prepared an oral report to give the school a preview of overall strengths and opportunities for improvement aligned to the framework and vision.

The week following the visit, the team communicated electronically to prepare the final written feedback report. This final report was sent to the school within seven days of the visit.

CEC is available to assist the school in any way it chooses to follow up with suggested next steps. The school has committed to use the information to update its improvement plans. It also has committed to allow at least one staff member to serve on an external review team for another system assessment visit.

This report summarizes the strengths and opportunities aligned to the continuous improvement criteria.

Field Park School System Assessment external review team members:

Mark Van Clay	CEC Team Leader	mark.vanclay@cecillinois.org
Steve Bahn	Principal LaGrange District 105	sbahn@d105.net
Carolyn Buchanan	Speech Path & Problem Solving Team LaGrange District 105	cbuchanan@d105.net
Vicki Faust	4 th Grade Teacher Glen Ellyn District 89	vfaust@ccsd89.org
Michelle Gower	First Grade Teacher Glen Ellyn District 89	mgower@ccsd89.org
Heather Kubit	1 st grade Glenview District 34	hkubit@glenview34.org
Jenny Levin	2 nd Grade	jlevin@glenview34.org

	Glenview District 34	
Alketa Mansaku	ELL Marquardt District 15	amansaku@d15.us
Anne McKenna	Music Marquardt District 15	amckenna@d15.us
Lisset Morvis	4 th Grade teacher LaGrange District 105	lmorvis@d105.net
Dana Onayemi	5 th grade teacher Marquardt District 15	donayemi@d15.us
Erin Ricci	5 th grade teacher Glen Ellyn District 89	ericci@ccsd89.org
Kim Russian	Resource teacher LaGrange District 105	krussian@d105.net
Linda Sokolowski	District Math Coordinator Marquardt District 15	lsokolowski@d15.us
Hannah Wagle	1 st grade teacher Marquardt District 15	hwagle@d15.us

SUMMARY OF OVERALL STRENGTHS

Among all of the strengths within each category and for all core values, the assessment team finds these strengths to be highest in priority. It is hoped that recognizing and celebrating these strengths will showcase past investment of resources in improving performance results.

Focus on Learning Strengths:

- + **Students come first, with an emphasis on support for the “whole child” within a culture of high expectations.** There is a focus on learning as opposed to a focus on teaching. Staff is dedicated to serving students and parents and spend long hours doing so. They are proactive rather than reactive. Students are very complimentary of their principal and teachers. Parents are proud and supportive of the school. Both academic and SEL expectations are high and actively (and successfully) pursued by staff.
- + **Assessment data is used throughout the school to drive high levels of differentiated instruction through a network of data and research-based interventions and enrichments.** There is a systematic, District-based Problem-Solving Team that processes Tier 2 & 3 services through a multi-point data review. Tiers 2 & 3 receive additional time during the school day (30 min. Tier 2, 60 min. Tier 3) to address identified areas of need. An

Enrichment Teacher coordinates enrichment options and services. Both Problem-Solving and Enrichment blend a thorough data review with direct teacher input. Data is used to monitor individual student progress to enter, continue or leave interventions. There are push-in and pull-out interventions available at both ends of the intervention spectrum.

- + Extensive common assessments are used, AIMS Web fluency tests and M.A.P. Tests inform instruction. Fountas and Pinnell running records guide grades 1 & 2 reading instruction. The Reading/ Language Arts curriculum binder contains common summative assessments. The school uses unit tests for math formative and summative assessments. Formative diagnosis for math is done primarily through MAP and through unit tests. Standard summative assessments are school and District strengths.**
- + Professional development opportunities are directly related to student learning and aligned to District/school goals and priorities. Strand training is contractually required of each teacher every two years. Examples of aligned strand training include Danielson rubrics, SMART Goals, SEL, diagnostic teaching & interventions. Staff have an annual opportunity to attend the August Lincolnshire PLC Summit. Common Core staff development and training was provided over the past school year.**
- + The school and District are making a commitment to institutionalizing best**

practices by beginning to align targets, assessments and pacing guides to the Common Core standards. Language Arts Common Core is being piloted this year through new pacing guides, grade level-based learning targets, and summative assessments. Common formative assessments are under development this year. There is a District schedule for linking all core subjects to the Common Core over the next number of years.

- + **The SEL program is extensive (commonly taught and reinforced school-wide), systematic and requires student analysis of inappropriate behaviors.** Most students set and track an SEL goal. The school's mission – focusing on school belonging in child language – is posted throughout the school. School SEL efforts are aligned to District SEL priorities.

Focus on Collaboration Strengths:

- + **Staff testifies that morale is high at this school.** Administration is open to staff needs and requests. Based on teacher testimony, the principal is open, approachable, supportive, non-threatening and honest. The principal is consistent at frequently sharing good news, especially from parents to teachers. Staff feels this is a “special school” and they testify that they love coming to work here. Teachers do not feel a sense of competition in this school.

Teams are particularly close-knit. There is trust, respect, mutual commitment and support among teachers school-wide.

- + **Collaboration is valued and intentional.** There are committed, collaborative grade level teams. Teams share data and information freely within grade levels. The schedule supports team collaboration with protected common planning time during the school day. Grade level teachers have a guaranteed hour of common planning time per week and an additional 1.5 hours for grades 2-5 (Grade 1 starting in January), all during the school day. The common grade level one hour guaranteed time is dedicated to team data analysis, discussion and instructional adjustments. A weekly Thursday Problem-Solving Team, which includes classroom teachers when one of their students is reviewed, includes a highly data-driven student review process. Enrichment Teacher/classroom teacher interactions depend upon student achievement data to determine enrichment offerings. Vertical articulation meetings are scheduled twice per year.
- + **The school has a mission, vision statement, values and goals that align to the District's strategic plan.** The mission is in student language (verse) and the mission, vision and values were developed collaboratively by staff. The mission and vision are posted throughout the school and the mission is read weekly by a student over the intercom. School goals are determined using assessment data and are aligned to District goals. Common school goal-based themes

seem to be creating common ELA formative assessments, solidifying ELA targets, and meeting school targets in both reading and math. District goals drive school goals, which drive principal goals, team goals and teacher goals.

- + **Parent partnerships and support are strong and parents feel positive about sending their children to this school.** Parent support, including providing before- and after-school activities, is readily available and enthusiastically offered. Parents feel welcomed at school and staff feels a partnership with parents. Communication back-and-forth is frequent, both formally and informally. Parents hold the principal and staff in high regard. Parents refer to the principal by his first name. One parent expressed her feelings toward the parent/school relationship as “one big hug”. Students enjoy coming to school and know their teachers and principal care about them.

Focus on Results Strengths:

- + **The school shows ample evidence of high academic achievement and is currently meeting AYP requirements in all subgroups and all subjects.** Evidence shows consistently high levels of student achievement and measureable growth. ISAT scores are among the best in the State. MAP scores are consistently above national norms. All subgroups perform at AYP

levels or higher. This is a very high achieving school by any set of measures.

- + **The school is committed to a SMART Goals approach.** The school is initiating SMART goals at the teacher level this year. While required to align to school goals, teacher goals can be specific to the needs of that teacher's students. School SMART goals align to District SMART goals. Summative assessments and SEL data are aligned to the District and school SMART Goals. There is a District template for SMART Goals that includes goals aligned to measures and targets. Action steps are spelled out. The SMART Goal template's targets are measurable.
- + **This is a "data-rich" environment.** Data is timely, accessible and user-friendly and there is an extensive, school-wide use of data to inform instruction and improve learning. There is a system in place for making data accessible to those who need it. Internally, results are shared through Google Docs, PowerSchool, and grade-level/administration data sharing. Teachers testify that data through Google Docs and a Data Dashboard is readily available as needed and user-friendly. Externally, results are shared through student report cards, school report cards and PowerSchool. Teachers are comfortable sharing achievement results with their grade level colleagues. At a team level, team members are open to learning from each other through data-based results. Student learning goals and targets are in place at District and school levels.

- + **The Problem-Solving and Enrichment processes are data driven, but also encourage direct teacher input.** Problem-Solving uses specific benchmarks (80% more support, 50% Tier 2, 30% Tier 3) from multiple data points. Enrichment utilizes MAP math results. Both processes blend the data with direct teacher input to determine interventions. A distinction between skills and performance levels is acknowledged, with attempts by Problem-Solving to address either as required.

SUMMARY OF OVERALL OPPORTUNITIES

Among all of the opportunities for improvement within each category and for all core values, the assessment team finds these opportunities to be highest in priority. It is hoped that addressing these opportunities will yield a high future return on investment of resources in improving performance results.

Focus on Learning Opportunities for Improvement:

- △ **There is a significant imbalance between common formative and summative assessment usage**, with *common* summative assessment use far more prevalent than *common* formative assessment use. Common formative assessments for Language Arts are “under construction” this year. Teachers testify that four or five common formative assessments from the math textbook series are used, though it is unclear whether their use is monitored or systematically used across all grades. There are no formative *common* assessments used in any other subject area.
- △ **Alignment to the Common Core is only at the beginning stages.** Language Arts alignment to the Common Core is just beginning this year, with the use of pacing guides, targets and summative assessments at the piloting stage. Piloting the math Common Core – the next subject area scheduled for Common Core alignment – for full implementation is two years away, due to a decision to delay implementation at staff request because of the complexity in implementing Language Arts. No other subject areas are aligned or presently in the process of being aligned to the Common Core (though a multi-year District schedule for doing so is in place).
- △ **Students are not responsible for their own learning.** Individual student goals

don't start until third grade. Because student goals may either be academic or SEL, most student goals are not academic. Teachers testify that monitoring individual student goals are a lot of extra work for them and therefore are not given priority. There are few expectations in place for students to take on learning ownership. There are no essential learning goals or targets to drive student involvement and understanding in what is expected of them to learn. Students know what the lesson objective is for each day but they are less certain of what they individually need to do to improve. Some data is tracked (ex. – on charts) but achievement measures are not consistently used or reported. Most students do not collect data on their goal and there is no common school-wide expectation that they do so.

△ **The school is more leveraged for academic achievement than it is for student growth.** The school and District have enviable student achievement results. However, it will be a challenge to translate this attainment success to also focusing on improving each student's growth: attainment shouldn't be compromised in doing so; nor should the impressively supportive student environment and the equally impressive parent respect for and trust in the school staff. Fundamentals for a student growth emphasis – essential learning targets; individual student goal-setting, data tracking and analysis; *common* formative assessments to drive individual diagnosis and instruction; a better common command of the MAP data possibilities (see below) – are not in place. PLC's Four Critical Questions are not systematically applied toward

ongoing individual student growth analysis and it is not clear how systematic teams are around utilizing data to inform instruction. At this point, MAP is the main assessment vehicle for attaining growth results even as direct student academic comparisons are discouraged. More independent student learners (see above) would help meet this challenge, as would a greater school-wide development of and reliance on SMART Goals (see below under Results Orientation) at the team and classroom levels. There is no SIP to guide the school in this effort. There is confusion among some regarding student growth – is it individually attaining District and school targets or is it having each child know what he or she next needs to learn and know?

- △ **There needs to be a clearer understanding of exactly what every child needs to learn and the schedule needs to maximally support those needs.** Teachers testified that, even with all of the ample curricular materials supplied to the school, they are not always sure what to teach. Nowhere during the entire interview process was Descarte mentioned. Descarte allows for ample prescriptive data that can give accurate formative information on what students need to know and to learn next. The systematic use of Descarte data could address the immediate need around identifying what to teach while Common Core alignment and the development of essential learning targets take place. Combined with essential learning targets and alignment to the Common Core, a solid use of the Descarte data will greatly improve the school's identification of exactly what each student should know and learn.

Once essential learning targets are identified, consideration of creating extended time blocks for reading and math would allow needed time for addressing the most important learning priorities.

- △ **There is a need to more closely align staff development offerings with present staff development and training needs.** Staff stated a desire for more SMART Goal training, more follow-up support around ELA initiatives required of them this year, and training on how to write good, common formative assessments. Evidence from the system assessment visit also suggests this school needs full-staff training in how to be a functioning PLC school, how to effectively utilize the PDSA Cycle and the Four Critical Questions, how to build school-wide communication norms, and (per above) how to use the Descarte application of the MAP data. The individually-based selection nature of the District strand offerings does not directly address these school-based training needs.

Focus on Collaboration Opportunities for Improvement:

- △ **There is a widespread feeling among teachers of being overwhelmed by the scope, complexity and number of new initiatives.** Discussions between staff and office can be time consuming, which can prevent needed communications

from occurring. This year's opening staff development day was daunting to many as they felt unprepared for what they heard. Some teachers feel initiatives or directives are top-down even when they come from a representative staff committee. Some teachers feel the District pushes initiatives before their time (ex. – two years revising a report card before the Common Core arrives). Several teachers testified that teaching has changed – some teachers don't enjoy teaching as much now. These examples demonstrate a need for the school staff to address what is naturally more pressure and accountability given the national state of public education vs. pressure that could be alleviated through clearer and more succinct communications, a common understanding of what the sequence of needed District and school change looks like over time, and common agreement around what must be tight (expected of all) verses what can be loose (individual or school autonomy).

△ **A SIP is needed that includes a “top-down and bottom-up” approach.** As stated above, there needs to be more clarity around what is top-down (tight) and what is bottom-up (loose). This clarity should be a part of the school's SIP. As one bottom-up example, continually improved teacher and team academic goals and targets could drive school targets and, in turn across all schools, eventually drive District targets. As one top-down example, all goals – from the boardroom to the classroom – need to align. The school's SIP has the potential to make these kinds of loose/tight clarifications clear and predictable to staff. The SIP should also address how to create a school-wide team, given that many of the

support staff have limited common planning time options and do not have a sense of belonging to a team.

△ **There is confusion around what being a PLC school involves.** Aside from citing common planning time, staff interviewed could not consistently describe what makes them a PLC school. While there are PLC applications present – collaborative planning time, identified mission/vision/common values, SMART Goals and regular data discussions – the PLC-based ability to be agile as a system in making needed changes or trying new things to continually improve is limited. Staff is not familiar with action research or a systematic problem-solving approach (PDSA Cycle). The alignment of District to school to classroom, particularly through District Goals, is known but its purpose and intentions are not commonly understood. SMART Goals (see below) are not clearly understood or systematically used, presently not yet in place for teachers and don't appear to drive classroom decisions beyond the overall District-based school goals. The Four Critical Questions do not appear to be systematically applied. Their potential to frame team instructional discussions and data analysis does not appear to be widely understood. Though there is ample common planning time for classroom teams (2.5 hours/week), evidence is sparse that more than an hour of that time is systematically dedicated to data analysis and common instructional planning and adjustments. This calls into question why the remaining planning time is *common* if it is not used for common purposes. It needs to be clear to all that being a PLC school is key to

continuously improving as a system.

△ **Staff/administrative communication around issues or new initiatives are not always clear or efficiently addressed.** While friendly and supportive, discussions are not typically direct and it is difficult to receive a quick answer to a quick question. The distinction within the school between what is collaborative and what is directive is not always clear. There is confusion as to when District direction ends and school autonomy begins. There is confusion as to when principal direction ends and staff autonomy begins. This makes the term “top down” – commonly cited by staff – confusing: it was used in interviews to label directives from the superintendent to the principal to a District-based staff committee. Collaboration is encouraged, but at this time, it appears largely to be personality driven because the principal is viewed as approachable and the staff is trusting of one another. There is a lack of collaborative tools (PDSA Cycle, Four Critical Questions, school-wide norms around collaboration and shared decision-making) in place to help make collaborative efforts more consistent and successful. Without such tools to support an ongoing collaborative effort, either key issues will be avoided rather than confronted in order to protect feelings or those positive feelings will eventually diminished in the face of issues or initiatives that cannot be avoided. Neither option allows the school to move smoothly and consistently forward toward ongoing continuous improvement.

△ The pace of change is slow, particularly given the exposure the school has had in the past to a variety of tools and supports for continuous improvement.

SMART Goals are only this year being adopted by classroom teachers, even though staff testimony states that SMART Goals have been a topic of discussion ever since the principal came to the school eight years ago. There was little evidence demonstrated that this is a functioning PLC school or that staff has a common understanding of what a PLC school looks like, even though many staff have attended a PLC summit. Evidence was not clear as to how all teams regularly analyze data, how their common planning time is used to do so, whether such common planning time is standardized through agendas, or whether there is a criteria-based process in place for teams to assess their functioning as a team. MAP data has been in place for a number of years but no mention of Descarte was heard through interviews from any staff.

△ A process for promoting support staff teams is not in place. There is little support staff feedback data captured by which to inform. Support staff do not feel their feedback is processed or responded to in as systematic a way as is classroom teacher feedback. There is no training provided for the mentoring program. Common planning time for support staff is difficult to find. Support staff are not sure how they fit into the overall District and school goals picture. This compromises the school's attempts to create an all-school team culture.

Focus on Results Opportunities for Improvement:

- △ **The data picture is not yet complete.** Student growth goals are being targeted for the first time this year, so growth result trends are just emerging. Academic growth targets are now required by 2016, but there was no evidence as to how the 50%+ District-wide “exceeds” target will be specifically addressed. Benchmark data (Lyons Township feeder schools and Hinsdale schools) are not used in the school to impact decisions or planning. The school lacks adequate satisfaction data – school-based satisfaction data were not available and the percentage of staff participation in the District’s culture survey was low. SEL does not have a formal tracking system around data. In part because the District and school generally discourage academic student competition and student learning goals in the school are not mandatory or data-driven, individual academic-based student learning goals and targets are not systematically in place.

- △ **The SMART Goal format used leaves out indicators, which describes the purpose for measurement, and staff is not clear around SMART Goal purposes or use.** SMART goals are being used school-wide this year for the first time, but District, school, team and classroom SMART Goals all lack Indicators. As a result, goal statements are not tightly aligned to targets and goals are not always clear. Teachers know the acronym and the District

“columns” but are confused as to how to write and use a SMART Goal. Most staff testified to the need for more systematic SMART Goal training. Many teachers voiced confusion as to how to write or use SMART Goals.

△ There needs to be more clarity around how the school utilizes data to prescribe and program for a very high achieving student population.

Testimony suggests that many parents and students are confused as to the criteria for Enrichment. Some parents stated that the “middle” student group does not receive help as do Tier 2/3 or Enrichment students, despite the ample resources the District and school dedicate to student learning supports. Because there is little emphasis on how each individual student is progressing on his or her own learning curve, there is not readily accessible data available to help clarify how each student’s *individual* learning needs should be addressed. Consider how a more focused use of data can help to make these clarifications more easily understood by parents and students.

△ There is staff insecurity around developing data discussion comfort beyond grade level teams. While grade level teams are comfortable sharing and discussing data together, this does not hold true at a building level. Many teachers expressed a reluctance to have pointed data discussions in an all-school setting. School-wide use of Descarte appears to be absent. Descarte represents another area where systematic staff training is needed.

NEXT STEPS

While this report is not intended to be prescriptive, this section provides some suggestions for addressing key opportunities for improvement. It provides suggestions that could serve as next steps. The strengths and areas of opportunity are based on set criteria framed by continuous improvement research. The priorities are not listed in any order. Each is equally important. Next Steps are framed by the experiences and opinions of the assessment team.

Priority: Focus on Learning

This school's challenge is to prepare itself to address individual student growth without compromising present high attainment levels or its safe and supportive school culture. Student growth requirements are already kicking in at the State level. SMART goals need to be written to be SMARTer and be more focused on *individual* student growth. Essential learning targets, linked to the Common Core in all subject areas, need to be established and common formative assessments to support them need to be as robust as are the common summative assessments presently used. PLC's Four Critical Questions need to drive an emphasis on making students truly responsible for their own learning. Staff development needs to be targeted and school-wide to address some critical

training needs that these changes will require.

Priority: Collaborative Culture

Your SIP needs to address how you will collaborate and what you will all commit to carrying out together in order to continuously improve as a school. Develop communication norms to streamline communications, especially between classroom and office, in order to commonly understand and agree upon what should be tight and what can be loose at your school. As a whole-school staff, address the feelings of being overwhelmed by initiatives and what all of you will do differently to better cope with District, school and your own expectations. Prioritize the utilization of PLC tools - the PDSA Cycle, the Four Critical Questions and action research - and data tools, such as Descarte and more robust SMART Goals (see below) - to aid in collective problem-solving and a more rapid acclimation to needed school-wide changes. Depend less on personalities and personality changes and more on these tools to enhance and improve collaboration.

Priority: Results Orientation

Look at your SMART Goals usage to challenge yourselves around how to make them more prescriptive, more individually accountable and better tied to individual student growth. Use this challenge as leverage to think about how you will be accountable for growth goals by 2016. Take advantage of the SMART goal training that is taking place right now as one of your strand offerings. Better yet, determine how to acquire

SMART Goal training – principal and staff together – this year. Tighter and more consistent use of SMART Goals will help you address issues around common formative assessments, learning targets, students taking responsibility for their own learning, parent confusion over enrichment criteria, and school-wide data sharing.