

**West Des Moines Community School District
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN/BUILDING GOALS
MIDYEAR REPORT
January, 2009**

BUILDING: Indian Hills Junior High School

GOAL #1: Learners will demonstrate improvement in critical thinking skills

1. Where are you currently in terms of successful implementation of this goal? (What is the current status?)

After spending three years studying critical thinking through individualized study groups, the Indian Hills staff decided to focus on integrating critical thinking strategies into the curriculum through the district initiative of Essential Questions, common assessment of the essential questions, and creation of a guaranteed and viable common curriculum using the WDMCS Curriculum Guide. Questioning is the most used critical thinking strategy used to produce inquiry learning.

Seven new learning groups were formed around departments: English/Language Arts, Science, Social Studies, Math, Special Education, Music, and Elective/Exploratory Groups. Often these learning groups divide into even smaller learning groups by grade or course taught. An additional learning group, the PBS (Positive Behavior Supports) group was the eighth learning group formed.

Learning groups meet at least twice every month usually during the 1st and 2nd early out Wednesdays. They meet with Stilwell departments at least twice per semester. Finally, they meet with curriculum directors routinely during half day or full day sessions. The curriculum directors have taken strong leadership in this endeavor and we are thankful for them.

Each department is at a different place in the essential question process. Departments first must identify essential questions for each course. Often they look to national, state, and/or district standards when doing so. After the questions are created, the departments create units around the questions. Coming to consensus on which units should be covered has led to some rich discussion. The groups are making progress.

Once these tasks are accomplished, the groups begin to discuss how they are going to assess each essential question. Groups are not expected to get to this level this year, but many have already begun. The teachers understand that every teacher must assess the essential questions. Some are creating authentic assessments. Some are using formative assessment. Still others have created a list of different ways that essential questions can be assessed. This year, we are really trying to focus on essential questions and intend to use next year for assessment. The groups have been asked to show their work in the WDMCS

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Curriculum Guide. It has been fun to watch these documents continue to grow and evolve. Even more fun is to see how the documents take life in the classroom.

Examples of Essential Questions from each department:

7th Grade Math—"Whole Numbers: Explain why $12-8/4+6$ is not equal to 7?"

8th Grade Math—"Set Theory: How are the intersection and union of sets different?"

7th Grade Science—"How would you use the scientific method to solve a problem?"

8th Grade Science—"Why is energy never 'lost'?"

7th Grade Social Studies—"What are the elements of culture?"

8th Grade Social Studies—"How are maps, charts, and data used to analyze historical events?"

7th Grade English—"What does it mean to define myself?"

8th Grade English—"How do individuals shape the world?"

Reading Resource—"How do proficient readers demonstrate comprehension strategies?"

7th Grade Family & Consumer Science—"How do I work safely in the kitchen?"

8th Grade Sewing—"How do I identify the world events and affects that society has on our clothing?"

8th Grade Foods—"Why is it important to know how to read a recipe?"

Study Skills (Special Education)—"What makes me a successful learner?"

English as a Second Language—"How is poetry relevant to my life?"

Learning Lab—"What are some areas where you would like to see improvement?"

Extended Learning Program—"How can I find connections between seemingly unrelated subjects?"

Industrial Technology—"What are the basic design skills and how should I use them?"

8th Grade Drama—"How does drama reflect culture as well as shape it?"

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8th Grade Communications Media—“What role do ethics play in developing media?”

Spanish I/Spanish 7—“What are the influences of the Spanish speaking world on the United States?”

Band—“To what extent are students able to perform varied repertoire music with expression and technical accuracy?”

Chorus—“What is exemplary vocal production?”

Physical Education—“How do I determine my level of health related and motor related fitness?”

7th Consumer Education—“What impact does your consumer choices have on your financial situation?”

7th Grade Art—“What techniques did you use to create that drawn effect?”

8th Grade Art—“Explain or elaborate on your idea-sources for these works?”

Counseling—“How do students apply their knowledge of self to career exploration?”

The PBS (Positive Behavior Support) group comprised of one teacher from each team, administration, and counselors has been attending training sessions through the Heartland AEA. In addition, the group meets every other Friday and once a month during the 3rd Wednesday collaboration. The group has been learning more about PBS and working through an action plan for implementation. Indian Hills has established commitment by administration and staff. We have established a team and completed self-assessments. School-wide expectations have been developed: Show your Tiger Pride: Be Respectful, Be Responsible, and Be Ready. We have completed a teaching matrix explaining in positive terms what the building expectations look like in different areas of the building. The group has created lesson plans for teaching these expectations and is currently working with the Communications Media classes to create video lessons. We have completed training to use HEART, an AEA database for academic and behavioral data, and have revised the office referral form to better collect data. Currently, the group is brainstorming a school-wide positive referral system. We were hoping to begin full implementation second semester but may need to wait until the start of the 2009 school year because of preparation for summer building renovation.

Groups are encouraged to share progress with their respective teams and departments and to implement changes. Teams are currently creating essential questions around interdisciplinary units. Critical thinking is an agenda item at every Department Collaboration and every Team Collaboration each month. Critical thinking is routinely discussed at the BLT (Building Leadership Team) committee meetings.

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At the January 7 collaboration, 2009, each group shared with the staff what they were doing and what their plans were for the future.

The SIP Action Plan was shared with PAC (Parent Advisory Committee) on September 11. The plan is on the Indian Hills web site and has been referred to in Indian Hills Newsletters.

2. What data or other evidence indicates progress towards the goal?

All 7th and 8th graders have taken the critical thinking pre-test on September 9 and 10 and will follow up with a post-test in the spring. Attached is the data from the critical thinking pre-test. The ITBS was given in November and results are in and currently being reviewed. Attached is data showing growth from 7th to 8th grade. Benchmark tests will be given closer to the end of the year.

Indian Hills created a critical thinking test from valid and reliable sources. We chose to use analogies as research has shown that they are the best indicator of critical thinking skills. Students have to be able to recognize a connection between two things by looking at two other things. Teachers review with students the many different connections that can happen in an analogy and practice the skills at the beginning of class and during Tiger Time.

The Jamestown reading passages used for the critical thinking test are organized in a very distinct way. The first five questions are usually recall questions. The second five questions are critical thinking questions: drawing conclusion, inference, etc. Students often score very well on the first five questions but have difficulty with the last five. We hope to show the most growth in the last five questions.

All learning groups, departments, teams, and committees send minutes from their meeting to the principals, department chairs, members of the group, and often to the whole staff.

3. Illustrate the key reason(s) why a particular strategy of the action plan for this goal currently has not, is not, or will not be implemented. Cite the rationale for this condition -- for example, is the condition due to time or resources, a change in priorities, or other circumstances which have emerged? (What conditions are impacting either current or future state?)

We will be following the district timeline for benchmark testing. The testing will be completed during second semester.

Teachers will continue to work in their learning groups throughout the second semester and present out during the May 6 Collaboration Day. Learning groups will continue to record minutes from each meeting.

The critical thinking post-test will be given in the spring on April 28 and 29.

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An update on the Action Plan will be given to PAC on February 5 and again May 7.

4. Which item(s) on last year's Student Shared Vision Survey was/were rated highest by your students?

After looking at the percent of students who selected agree and strongly agree to each question, students at Indian Hills rated the item "I feel that at least one adult at my school knows me," as the highest with 88% in agreement.

5. Which item(s) on last year's Student Shared Vision Survey was/were rated lowest by your students?

The Indian Hills' students rated, "I find joy in learning," the lowest on the vision survey with 58% in agreement and 10% in disagreement. This is the same category as last year. Although the agreement percent went down 1%, the disagreement percent went down 3%. Over three years the agreement percent went up 4% and the disagreement percent went down 6%.

6. What is your school doing this year to address the results of the Shared Vision Survey? (list 1-3 initiatives or programs)

Every year Indian Hills looks at the Vision Survey results and make a list of ideas to improve results. Tiger Time has been the addition to the school day that has brought the biggest positive change and continues to bring positive change. The Tiger Time Committee meets a couple times each school year to organize and develop a calendar that meets the needs of students. One important day that is planned is Team Time where teams create team building activities for students to get to know each other and the teachers.

An area that is a concern is that 27% of the students report that they are not involved in school sponsored activities, clubs, or sports. The district and building have worked very hard to have after school activities for students. This year more students are involved in After the Bell. We have also tried to increase intramural activities and have started a weight lifting program that meets every morning before school.

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“Critical Thinking Strategies”

- Our goal is to discuss critical thinking and to identify some specific strategies to strengthen critical thinking in the classroom.
 - *Classroom Instruction that Works*. Marzano, Pickering et al. ASCD. 2001
 - Cites “Identifying **Similarities and Differences**” as one of the most effective strategies to enhance critical thinking
 - Research indicates that students with specific S/D instruction will gain up to 45% in achievement when compared to students who do not experience S/D instruction (FYI: 34% improvement = 1 standard deviation)
- Similarities/Comparing**: Venn diagrams, put into categories, T-Charts, graphic organizers...
- Analogies**: the process of identifying relationships between pairs of concepts, in other words- identifying relationships between relationships
- Metaphors**: the process of identifying a general or basic pattern in a specific topic and then finding another topic that appears to be quite different but has the same general pattern
- Problem Solving**: Using the scientific approach to utilize multiple perspectives to uncover the issues related to a particular problem, design an intervention plan, and evaluate the outcome.
- Cause/Effect**: The ability to perceive and anticipate the consequences of a given action or statement.
- Questioning**: At many levels not just recall of facts. Use **Bloom’s Taxonomy**
- Differentiation**: Teachers can differentiate process, product, and content according to student’s interest, readiness, and learning profile through a range of instructional and management strategies such as multiple intelligences, pre-testing, jigsaw, tiered lesson, tiered centers, tiered products, learning contracts, etc.
- Inquiry Learning**: Use the five E’s of Inquiry Learning: Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate
- Balanced Literacy**: Reading aloud, shared reading, guided reading, independent reading, modeled/shared writing, interactive writing, independent writing, speaking, and listening
- Middle School Philosophy**: According to the NMSA developmentally responsible middle level schools provide curriculum that is challenging, integrative, and exploratory; multiple teaching and learning approaches; assessment and evaluation that promote learning; flexible organizational structures; programs and policies that foster health, wellness and safety; and comprehensive guidance and support services.

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- **Technical Writing**

- Reducing metacognition to writing

- Research indicates that while having students explain, demonstrate or showing how to show how to solve a problem is effective.....having students write about how they solve a problem really puts them over the top.

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8th ITBS Growth from school year 2007 to present school year 2008

Reading

| | Vocabulary | Comprehension | Reading Total | |
|------------------|------------|---------------|---------------|--|
| 8 th | 10.2 | 10.6 | 10.6 | |
| 7 th | 8.6 | 9.0 | 8.9 | |
| Growth in N.G.E. | +1.6 | +1.6 | +1.7 | |

Language

| | Spelling | Capitalization | Punctuation | Usage&Expression | Lang. Total |
|------------------|----------|----------------|-------------|------------------|-------------|
| 8 th | 10.6 | 12.6 | 12.7 | 12.2 | 11.9 |
| 7 th | 9.5 | 11.0 | 11.8 | 10.1 | 10.6 |
| Growth in N.G.E. | +1.1 | +1.6 | +0.9 | +2.1 | +1.3 |

Math

| | Concepts/Estimation | Prob. Solving/Data Interpretation | Computation | Math Total |
|------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|------------|
| 8 th | 11.1 | 11.6 | 12.4 | 11.4 |
| 7 th | 9.8 | 10.3 | 9.8 | 10.0 |
| Growth in N.G.E. | +1.3 | +1.3 | +2.6 | +1.4 |

Sources of Information

| | Maps and Diagrams | Reference Materials | Total | |
|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------|--|
| 8 th | 11.9 | 11.1 | 11.5 | |
| 7 th | 10.3 | 10.1 | 10.2 | |
| Growth in N.G.E. | +1.6 | +1.0 | +1.3 | |

| | Core | Social Studies | Science | Composite |
|------------------|------|----------------|---------|-----------|
| 8 th | 11.2 | 10.0 | 12.6 | 11.3 |
| 7 th | 9.8 | 9.9 | 10.3 | 10.1 |
| Growth in N.G.E. | +1.4 | 0.1 | +2.3 | 1.2 |

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2008 ITBS Achievement Levels

| % Proficient State Trajectory | | | |
|-------------------------------|---------|------|---------|
| 8 th Grade | Reading | Math | Science |
| 2008 | 73.3 | 72 | n/a |

| Building Proficiency Levels 2008 | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------|------|---------|
| | Reading | Math | Science |
| 7 th Grade | 83.8 | 86.9 | 89.8 |
| 8 th Grade | 87.2 | 89.7 | 94.1 |

| Proficiency Levels Growth of 8 th Grade | | | |
|--|---------|------|---------|
| Grade | Reading | Math | Science |
| 8 th 2008 | 87.2 | 89.7 | 94.1 |
| 7 th 2007 | 88.1 | 88.8 | 92.7 |
| Growth | -0.9 | +0.9 | +1.4 |

| 8 th Grade Proficiency Subgroups 2007 to 2008 | | |
|--|---------|------|
| *Safe Harbor for 10% Reduction in Non-Proficient Groups | | |
| Subgroup (N) | Reading | Math |
| 8 th 2008 IEP Proficiency (33) | 54.5 | 60.7 |
| 8 th 2008 SES Proficiency (30) | 66.7 | 63.3 |
| 8 th 2008 ELL Proficiency (13) | 53.9 | 46.2 |
| 8 th 2008 Black Proficiency (13) | 84.7 | 69.2 |
| 8 th 2008 Hispanic Proficiency (19) | 73.7 | 68.4 |
| | | |
| 8 th 2007 IEP Low Proficiency | 60.7 | 42.8 |
| 8 th 2008 IEP Low Proficiency | 45.5 | 39.4 |
| % Reduction Low Proficiency | +15.2 | +3.4 |
| | | |
| 8 th 2007 SES Low Proficiency | 42.1 | 42.1 |
| 8 th 2008 SES Low Proficiency | 33.4 | 36.6 |
| % Reduction Low Proficiency | +8.7 | +5.5 |

*Data provided from ITBS Building FAY Achievement Levels Summary

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Indian Hills Critical Thinking Test Summary 2008-09

| 7 th Grade Test Results | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Question | % Correct Pre-Test | % Correct Post-Test | % Gain or Loss |
| Reading #1 | 83.4 | | |
| Reading #2 | 96.8 | | |
| Reading #3 | 71.5 | | |
| Reading #4 | 87.2 | | |
| Reading #5 | 82.3 | | |
| Reading #6 | 91.3 | | |
| Reading #7 | 89.2 | | |
| Reading #8 | 59.9 | | |
| Reading #9 | 58.1 | | |
| Reading #10 | 82.6 | | |
| Analogy #1 | 75.8 | | |
| Analogy #2 | 77.8 | | |
| Analogy #3 | 64.1 | | |
| Analogy #4 | 50.1 | | |
| Analogy #5 | 77.6 | | |
| Analogy #6 | 72.9 | | |
| Analogy #7 | 84.3 | | |
| Analogy #8 | 89.5 | | |
| Analogy # 9 | 92.7 | | |
| Analogy #10 | 68.8 | | |
| Average | 77.8 | | |

*Source of reading questions: Jamestown Reading Inventory 7th grade level.

*Source of analogy questions: Houghton-Mifflin Analogies 7th grade edition.

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| 8 th Grade Test Results | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Question | % Correct Pre-Test | % Correct Post-Test | % Gain or Loss |
| Reading #1 | 98.0 | | |
| Reading #2 | 99.3 | | |
| Reading #3 | 100 | | |
| Reading #4 | 79.9 | | |
| Reading #5 | 86.1 | | |
| Reading #6 | 73.8 | | |
| Reading #7 | 45.2 | | |
| Reading #8 | 54.4 | | |
| Reading #9 | 40.1 | | |
| Reading #10 | 77.2 | | |
| Analogy #1 | 62.2 | | |
| Analogy #2 | 61.9 | | |
| Analogy #3 | 75.9 | | |
| Analogy #4 | 73.2 | | |
| Analogy #5 | 58.1 | | |
| Analogy #6 | 90.7 | | |
| Analogy #7 | 92.1 | | |
| Analogy #8 | 64.3 | | |
| Analogy # 9 | 62.2 | | |
| Analogy #10 | 73.2 | | |
| Average | 73.39 | | |

*Source of reading questions: Jamestown Reading Inventory 8th grade level.

*Source of analogy questions: Houghton-Mifflin Analogies 8th grade edition.