

Please email to Sheri Ankeney on or before June 19.

**West Des Moines Community School District
SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN/BUILDING GOALS
YEAR-END EVALUATION
June, 2009**

Indian Hills Junior High School

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

- 1. Student data or other evidence to support changes in student attitude, behavior or performance.**

Attached is the following data:

Critical Thinking Pre/Posttest data
ITBS growth chart

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.

Tiger Time was also used to work on our critical thinking goal. During the Mindful Monday activities, students worked on analogies, thinking puzzles, questions, brain ticklers, brain games, brainteasers, and trivia. In addition, students practiced working on analogies in many of the content areas. Students seemed to enjoy the activities. The vision survey again showed growth in students feeling that at least one adult in the building knows them and that they find joy in learning.

District Math, Science, Social Studies, and English Benchmark data would be additional sources not included here.

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2. Data or other evidence showing that all appropriate staff members are implementing the action steps/strategies.

All Indian Hills staff members were part of a learning group based on department. Each learning group met at least nine times between September and May during collaboration as well as on their own time before or after school. Every group presented their learning to the faculty in December and May. Below is the summary of what each learning group / department worked on throughout the year.

The 2008-2009 school year was a transition year for the Indian Hills **Math** Department. We broke into grade level groups and wrote essential questions to go along with our units. During the year, we also became aware of the fact that we needed to align with the Iowa Core Curriculum. This will change some of the units that we teach, as well as the essential questions that we have written. We also spent time examining new text book materials, made a final decision, and will be adopting new texts for the next school year. Our selection process was made in part by aligning with the essential questions that we had written.

Throughout the 2008-2009 school year, the Indian Hills **Science** Department met to discuss essential questions and the district curriculum guide. In addition, we also met with the Stilwell science department on several occasions to discuss these topics and to align our curriculum. Both the 7th grade and 8th grade science departments had many discussions about essential questions. Both grade levels have developed a list of essential questions that will help to focus our teaching and student learning. We have also created district curriculum guides based around these essential questions.

Another focus this school year was the Iowa Core Curriculum. We had discussions at the district level to ensure that we were covering all aspects of the Iowa Core Curriculum. We tied our district curriculum to the Iowa Core Curriculum. Our next task is to create common assessments for all of our essential questions.

Examples of essential questions:

7th grade science—

Chemistry

Explain how to stay safe in a laboratory environment.

Matter- why does it matter?

How are physical and chemical changes essential to our lives? Explain one of each.

8th grade science—

Physics

Why is energy never “lost”?

How do the laws of motion apply to your daily life?

Scientific Inquiry Processes

How would you use the scientific method to solve a problem?

The **Social Studies** Learning Group has worked collaboratively to write, pilot, and assess the Essential Questions for each unit of study. We have effectively

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completed the task of writing the Essential Questions and are in the process of piloting their implementation and assessments. An example of an Essential Question for the Mesopotamia unit is, ***“Why did the earliest civilizations develop writing, government, and religion?”***

As a part of the assessment for this question, students will be expected to analyze information learned throughout the course of the unit and explain the purposes of development of writing and how writing changed over time. They will also be expected to communicate the importance of government in any civilization, how it developed, and provide specific examples of civilizations that experienced governmental change. Finally, students will use information gathered over the course of several early civilization units to communicate effectively how and why religions developed. They will be able to provide written communication detailed how a monotheistic group developed out of a polytheistic society.

Through these communications, the teacher will be able to assess accurately the mastery of the concepts that make up the Essential Question, “Why did the earliest civilizations develop writing, government, and religion?” All Essential Questions have been aligned with the Iowa Core Curriculum and assessments are in place. In preparation of these assessments, a variety of teaching strategies are used that focus on critical thinking. Examples of these strategies include critical thinking analogies, cross-curricular analogies, and cause/effect statements in relation to history and real-life.

Some examples of critical thinking activities used in classes for “bell” work are:

1. Nile Delta : Egypt :: Fertile Crescent : Mesopotamia

Relationship- area of civilization with the best farmland

2. Flooding : rain & melted snow :: drought : dry weather

Relationship – vocabulary development

3. Ancient Egypt : hieroglyphics :: Sumer : cuneiform

Relationship- system of writing

Additionally, we have worked to complete our aligned curriculum guides. These guides have been an integral of our teaching and our students’ learning. As a result of completing and implementing the curriculum guide across the district, we are confident our students will have the necessary skills needed to move seamlessly into the next level of social studies. Our curriculum guide includes Content Standards, Iowa Core Curriculum, Essential Questions, Assessments, and General Requirements of each unit in the seventh-grade curriculum.

This year both 7th and 8th grade **English** changed/updated our Essential Questions to reflect the Iowa Core Curriculum. We re-focused our Essential Questions to be more student-centered. For example: How does reading help me become more understanding of others? (7th) How do I decide what my purpose is for writing? (8th) Our assessments will mostly be based on writing folders or learning portfolios. Fortunately, we were able to incorporate our 6+1 Trait Writing in our curriculum guide, Essential Questions, and classrooms. Not

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only did we work on Essential Questions this year, but we also focused on 6+1 Traits of Writing in our learning group and with the staff.

The **Reading Resource** Learning Group consisted of Amy Underbakke, Pat Kraus and Beth Hoyt. We aligned our essential questions with the Iowa Core Curriculum, as well as integrated our own EQ's with those of the 7th and 8th grade English EQ's. The following are the essential questions for district standard 3: The Reading Process: How do proficient readers demonstrate comprehension strategies? What do students do when comprehension breaks down? How do proficient readers independently infer and evaluate meaning from the text?

This year **Family and Consumer Science** Learning Group worked closely with Stilwell's FCS department. We aligned all three courses that are offered in FCS at the junior high level. Essential Questions were written for all three courses which include: 7th grade Block, 8th grade Foods and 8th grade Sewing. While aligning these courses we worked with Valley's FCS curriculum guide to insure that the junior high level courses are a preliminary to the high school program. Both junior high schools also will be assessing students in the same way so if a student transfers from one junior high to another that the FCS course curriculum and assessments are identical. It was a very productive year.

The **Special Education** teachers have written five essential questions that will be integrated into the units of the new 7th grade Foundations of Social Studies class and curriculum guide, as well as in the Study Skills class curriculum. The five essential questions are 1.) How will having organizational skills help me in my academic career or in my classroom learning? 2.) How can I demonstrate independent learning and how will this skill effect post secondary living, learning, and working? 3.) What makes me a successful learner? 4.) What does it mean to be a self-advocate and why do I need to be one? 5.) How will prioritizing my time and tasks help me be more successful? We developed the essential questions in collaboration with the special education teachers at Stilwell. The curriculum guide work and common assessments are in the process of being developed with the Foundations of Social Studies curriculum team.

English Language Learners will develop their use and knowledge of English by exploring and learning how to write poetry. Poetry teaches about different structures of language and provides a tool for the development of vocabulary. It enables the student to make use of their own prior knowledge and adapt and synthesize what they know about life and language through the use of those structures. Examples of poetry will be studied and discussed to facilitate to understanding. Poetry is everywhere: in music, songs, story telling... students will recognize the relevance that poetry has in their lives, and how the use of it in a language provides a useful tool for them to understanding and think in a language. Through poetry the students will develop language and thinking skills by creating metaphors, similes and analogies in authentic student work.

In **Learning Lab** for our At Risk students, I have broken down the entire core curriculum into their essential questions, so the students can focus on those

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main ideas and concepts. I reinforce the essential questions, as well as help the students prioritize and organize their time for task completion and understanding.

The **ELP** Learning Group has completed its Essential Questions Spreadsheet. There are nine curricular areas covered within the Template. The Standards and Benchmarks were taken partially from the Autonomous Learner Model that the ELP K-12 program is based on. The units covered have, for the most part, questions based off of the top tier of Higher Order Thinking and Critical Thinking Practices. An example of one Essential Question would be: “What are the comparisons between the laws created after 1941 and the Patriot Act?” off of the Standard of Enrichment and the Benchmark of Analyzing information to formulate independent conclusions.

The **Technology Education** Departments of Indian Hills and Stilwell have been busy this year with curriculum adoption. Through several meetings with Dave Blum and between departments, we have worked through textbook adoption, common curriculum units, and equipment bids and purchases. Sample essential question: What do all 7th grade students need to know when they leave our program?

This year, the junior high **Drama** Departments have finalized the essential questions and curriculum guides for 8th grade Drama and 8th grade Communication Media. Essential questions for drama focus on the elements needed for successful productions and collaboration (What makes a theatrical production valuable? What elements are necessary for successful artistic expression?) as well as how drama influences and is influenced by society (What attitudes and understandings are necessary for successful collaboration in drama? How does drama reflect culture, as well as shape it?). Communication Media focuses on how the media influences society and how students came become media literate and use all the resources to their advantage (How could others interpret the same content differently and what do I learn about myself from my reaction? What ideas, values, information and/or points of view are communicated in the different forms of media?). After establishing the essential questions and curriculum guide, we have been working on creating assessments that are sure to address the standards and questions. Between Stilwell and Indian Hills, we include the same units and concepts needed to succeed in creative dramatics. We build upon the previous skills until students are relying on all of them in order to create a final collaborative project.

The **Spanish I and 7th grade Exploratory Spanish** teachers have created essential questions and a curriculum map for both curricula. We will be adding common activities to the Spanish I map next year. We also have created common assessments for each of the units and will be revising them next year. One of the essential questions for the beginning of Spanish I is--How can I ask for and give basic information in Spanish class?

Indian Hills **Band**/Stilwell Band

- 1) We have aligned the curriculum 7-8 to match outcomes
- 2) We have aligned assessment tools to reflect outcomes for both exiting 7 & 8 grade band students

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3) We have met 5-12 and set standards and benchmarks for elementary and secondary levels.

4) To what extent are students able to perform a wide variety of repertoire with expression and technical accuracy? This is a focal point of every day's work in rehearsal. We strive for musical expression utilizing dynamics, articulation, phrasing and technical proficiency on their instruments to perform in concerts and music festivals.

During conversations over the course of the 2008-2009 school year, the **Orchestra** Departments of Indian Hills Junior High and Stilwell Junior High worked to better align curriculum and discuss important skills for students to master as 8th and 9th graders before these students moved to Valley Southwoods to begin High School Orchestra. In these discussions 2 major areas were addressed; Teaching students self-tuning techniques and having students master the ability to perform works in 6 major keys including, C, G, D, A, F and Bb. The string department from each school discussed current practices at each separate building and ways we could integrate teaching techniques at our own respective sites. Further discussion included topics of lesson scheduling and solo ensemble preparation. Though we were not able to completely develop the essential questions we were looking for involving "self tuning" and key "signature mastery", we have made progress in both areas and plan to continue with those items as main focuses in the fall of the 2009-2010 school year.

The **PE** Learning Group has worked at implementing our essential questions into our curriculum. One we believe is very important in our class is: How do I determine my own level of health related fitness? We have started using heart rate monitors in our classes and we believe that this really helps us reinforce to our students the importance of maintaining a healthy level of physical activity. This is a great learning tool for the students. We worked together with the P.E. teachers at Stilwell to come up with essential questions that we all could agree on, and we shared things from our curriculum to help us out for our schedule for next year.

Consumer Education: What impact do your consumer choices have on your financial situation? That cover is one of two that covers the Economics and Personal Finance section of the course. After writing the essential questions, we completed our unit benchmarks. Finally, to complete the curriculum guide, Stilwell and IH chose to split this on our own, as we cover things a bit differently in terms of projects assigned. We each broke down our own curricular units based on the order in which we cover them and the projects assigned. That is where we currently stand.

The **Visual Art** teachers at Indian Hills and Stilwell created essential questions and started to talk about curriculum mapping. We discussed the similarities between projects and activities each teacher is using at both grade levels. Two of the essential questions for 7th and 8th grade Visual Art are: How did you use the elements and/or principles when creating this work? Where did you find inspiration for the idea or concept of your piece?

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The **Counselor** Learning Group wrote three essential questions which addressed Career Exploration for 8th graders. We developed a core curriculum plan to meet state guidelines set forth by the state of Iowa. The purpose is to provide students a format in order to explore their future plans as they relate to their careers and curriculum. Our essential questions consist of: How is Kuder useful in career exploration? How are individual assessment results utilized in career exploration? How do students apply their knowledge of self in relation to career exploration?

The **PBS (Positive Behavior Support)** Group comprised of one teacher from each team, administration, and counselors have 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. Communications Media classes also created and completed video lessons to show students expectations. 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. The group created and is ready to implement a school-wide positive referral system. We will begin full implementation at the start of the school year.

Overall, the Indian Hills staff really enjoyed working in smaller groups learning together. Many articles and much research have shown the power of smaller learning communities over large group professional development. What is being learned is actually being implemented! Each staff member has incorporated new strategies into their classroom instruction or Tiger Time to help students develop their critical thinking skills.

3. By what means were the goal and action plan communicated to parents?

The Indian Hills' school improvement plan was shared at the first Parent Advisory Committee, PAC, in September. The school improvement plan was attached to the IH website for anyone to review. The midyear report was prepared by the Building Leadership Team in January for the board of education and again attached to the IH website. In February, the School Improvement Plan and ITBS results were shared with PAC. In May, the year-end presentation by the teacher learning groups was shared with PAC. Parents were excited about how much learning and implementation was going on. We also communicated information about our goal to parents through the newsletter and Infinite Campus Messenger. Finally, the end of the year report will be attached to the IH website for parents to view as will the 2009-2010 School Improvement Plan.

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4. Planned “significant” future actions pertaining to this goal (to be considered when identifying goals/strategies for the ensuing school year):

During the 09/10 school year, the Indian Hills staff will continue working on the critical thinking goal in learning groups with a focus on revision of essential questions and creation of common assessments. Working with curriculum directors, Stilwell, Walnut Creek, Valley Southwoods, and Valley High School, the Indian Hills staff will revise the list of essential questions as they continue to develop units to create a guaranteed and viable, aligned curriculum 7-12. A larger focus will be given to developing common assessments. Units will incorporate the critical thinking strategies learned as well as other suggested best practice strategies. All staff members will be part of a learning group created around departments. Each will set a group goal to learn and implement strategies into the classroom to help students increase their critical thinking. This will be evidenced by observations, minutes of meetings and classroom artifacts.

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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

7th Grade Test Results			
Question	% Correct Pre-Test	% Correct Post-Test	% Gain or Loss
Reading #1	83.4	86.2	2.8
Reading #2	96.8	97.3	0.5
Reading #3	71.5	80.9	9.4
Reading #4	87.2	93.3	6.1
Reading #5	82.3	84.9	2.6
Reading #6	91.3	94.3	3.0
Reading #7	89.2	86.9	-2.3
Reading #8	59.9	64.8	4.9
Reading #9	58.1	58.4	0.3
Reading #10	82.6	83.2	0.6
Analogy #1	75.8	86.6	10.8
Analogy #2	77.8	83.6	5.8
Analogy #3	64.1	69.1	5.0
Analogy #4	50.1	57.7	7.6
Analogy #5	77.6	87.2	9.6
Analogy #6	72.9	83.9	11.0
Analogy #7	84.3	94.6	10.3
Analogy #8	89.5	95.6	6.1
Analogy #9	92.7	96.0	3.3
Analogy #10	68.8	80.2	14.7
Average	77.8	83.24	5.44

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

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

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8th Grade Test Results			
Question	% Correct Pre-Test	% Correct Post-Test	% Gain or Loss
Reading #1	98.0	97.3	-0.7
Reading #2	99.3	97.6	-1.7
Reading #3	100	97.9	-2.1
Reading #4	79.9	86.3	6.4
Reading #5	86.1	82.5	-3.6
Reading #6	73.8	83.9	10.1
Reading #7	45.2	50.7	5.5
Reading #8	54.4	59.2	4.8
Reading #9	40.1	49.0	8.9
Reading #10	77.2	86.3	9.1
Analogy #1	62.2	65.1	2.9
Analogy #2	61.9	58.2	-3.7
Analogy #3	75.9	89.0	13.1
Analogy #4	73.2	82.2	9.0
Analogy #5	58.1	65.1	7.0
Analogy #6	90.7	93.2	2.5
Analogy #7	92.1	94.9	2.8
Analogy #8	64.3	67.1	2.8
Analogy # 9	62.2	73.3	11.1
Analogy #10	73.2	78.4	5.2
Average	73.39	77.86	4.47

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

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