



**Standards Assessment Report**  
**AdvancED Education Service Agency**  
**Accreditation**

*For NCA CASI and SACS CASI ESAs*



# ESA Standards Assessment Report

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### ATTACHMENT

#### SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROFILE MODEL

**Hillsdale County Intermediate School district  
Champion Team**

**Standard I, Vision & Purpose**

John Ciaravino, Executive Director  
Years of Service to HCISD: 31

**Standard II, Governance & Leadership**

Robert Henthorne, Superintendent  
Years of Service to HCISD: 7

**Standard III, Teaching & Learning**

Kevin Leonard, Career and Technical Education Center Director  
Years of Service to HCISD: 8  
Rhonda Eves, Greenfield School Principal/Special Education Supervisor  
Years of Service to HCISD: 11  
Charlotte Cole, PhD Renaissance School Teacher/Director  
Years of Service to HCISD: 22

**Standard IV, Documenting & Using Results**

Pat, General Education Supervisor  
Years of Service to HCISD: 8

**Standard V, Resource & Support Systems**

JC Morris, Technology Supervisor  
Years of Service to HCISD: 8  
Belinda Shaffer, Business & Finance Director  
Year of Service to HCISD: 12

**Standard VI, Stakeholder Communications & Relationships**

Judy Kochendorfer, Vocational Education Director  
Years of Service to HCISD: 25  
Kim Svacha, Administrative Assistant to the Superintendent  
Years of Service to HCISD: 7

**Standard VII, Commitment to Continuous Improvement**

Pat Dillon, General Education Supervisor  
Years of Service to HCISD: 8

## Agency Organizational Profile

Please provide the information requested below to assist in understanding the work done by your ESA. If your agency provides services or programs not listed, add them in the space provided.

### School Districts Served by the Agency

Name of District	Superintendent	Approximate Distance from Agency Offices
Camden-Frontier Schools	Wendy Moore	14 miles
Hillsdale Community Schools	Richard Ames	1
Jonesville Community Schools	Michael Potts	8
Litchfield Community Schools	Tom Bartol	15
North Adams-Jerome Public Schools	Chris Voisin	10
Pittsford Area Schools	Andrew Shaw	11
Reading Community Schools	Michael Potts	11
Waldron Area Schools	William Stitt	22
Will Carleton Academy	Colleen Gadwood	2
Hillsdale Preparatory Academy	Jim Rowen	2

### New and Existing Stand-Alone Schools/Centers/Campuses Operated by the Agency\*

Name	Principal/Director	Targeted Student Population and Number Served	Approximate Distance from Agency Offices
The Manor	Fred Prasser	Residential	8 miles
Greenfield School	Rhonda Eves	Special Ed	3
Career/Tech Center	Kevin Leonard	Vocational Ed	3

\* Only list those that meet the AdvancED accreditation definition of having a state identification code or number. If applicable, include Head Start, Michigan School Readiness Preschool.

### Services Provided to the Agency

Service	Agency Director/Supervisor	Description
Marks and Lisznyi	Administration	Legal Counsel
Thrun Law Firm	Administration	Legal Counsel
Brown Consultancy	Special Education	Psychological Services
Peterson Public Consultancy	Administration	Administration Consultation
King Scott	Administration	Architectural /Engineering
Todd Dailey	Administration	Engineering
Internet Access	Technology	Internet Access/Policy
NEOLA	Administration	Policy Development
County Wide Truancy	General Ed	Truancy Officer

**Programs Provided by the Agency**

Program Name	Agency Program Director/ Supervisor	Goal of Program
Material Delivery	Belinda Shaffer	Interoffice Delivery
Special Education Training	John Ciaravino	Align Resources
Student Service Software and Support	Joe Morris	Align Resources
Special Ed Monitoring and Comp.	John Ciaravino	Monitoring of Sp. Ed. Service
Finance Software and Support	Belinda Shaffer	System Resource and Support
Video Conferencing	Joe Morris	Communication Resource
Technology Consulting	Joe Morris	Consultancy
Educational Technology Services	Joe Morris	Resource and Consultancy
School Improvement Consultancy	Pat Dillon	Resource and Consultancy
Online Videos: United Streaming	Pat Dillon	Student/Teacher Resource
Pupil Accounting and Auditing	Judy Kochendorfer	Monitoring and Accountability
No Child Left Behind (NCLB and Ed YES! Support and Professional Development)	Pat Dillon	Monitoring and Consultancy
Special Education Regional Coordination	John Ciaravino	Coordination and Consultancy
Special Education Itinerate Services	John Ciaravino	Coordination and Delivery
State Board Continuing Education Units (SB-CEU) professional development credits	Kim Svacha	Staff Service
South Central Michigan Works!	Christine Quinn	Job Training
CTE Program Development	Judy Kochendorfer	Program Development

**ESA Profile** completed by:

Patrick Dillon

General Education Supervisor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Day Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email

## Hillsdale County Intermediate School District Demographic Data

	Hillsdale County	State of Michigan
Population	47,066	10,120,860
Persons under 18	24.7%	25.1%
High School graduates	83.1%	83.4%
Bachelor's degree or higher	12.0%	21.8%
Median household income	\$40,061	\$46,291
Person's below poverty	10%	11%

Public K-12 Districts	Pupils	Spending Per Pupil
Camden-Frontier Schools	637	\$7,867
Hillsdale Community Schools	1,857	\$7,037
Jonesville Community Schools	1,360	\$7,255
Litchfield Community Schools	478	\$7,542
North Adams-Jerome Schools	539	\$6,740
Pittsford Area Schools	726	\$7,195
Reading Community Schools	944	\$7,170
Waldron Area Schools	381	\$7,772
Total	6,922	Average Spending: \$7,322.25

**State Average**  
**\$8,327**

Level	No. of Schools	No. Pupils	School Ranges
High Schools	8	2,145	136 - 567
Middle Schools*	8	1,565	102 - 388
Elementary Schools**	10	3,212	153 - 843
Public Charter Schools	2	278	

Total number of students	6,922
Total dollars spent county wide	\$50,682,844
Total dollars spent on average per student	\$7,322
Foundation allowance	\$6,875
Total number of teachers	409

<i>What are the odds of our students successfully passing the 4<sup>th</sup> / 5<sup>th</sup> Grade MEAP?</i>			
Subject	Hillsdale County	District Ranges	State/Top 10
Reading (4 <sup>th</sup> )	78.2	66.7-87.4	83.2 / 95.6
Math (4 <sup>th</sup> )	80.4	65.5 – 88.1	81.6 / 95.2
Science (5 <sup>th</sup> )	75.0	48.1 – 89.7	76.8 / 94.4
Writing (4 <sup>th</sup> )	46.0	31.0 – 72.7	54.8 / 76.4
English Language Arts (4 <sup>th</sup> )	68.3	48.3 – 83.0	75.6 / 93.6

*What are the odds of our students successfully passing the  
7th / 8th Grade MEAP?*

Subject	Hillsdale County	District Ranges	State/Top 10
Reading (7 <sup>th</sup> )	74.5	68.2 – 89.1	75.8 / 94.9
Math (7 <sup>th</sup> )	65.0	43.2– 80.6	63.2 / 92.5
Science (8 <sup>th</sup> )	77.9	68.4 – 86.8	76.8 / 95.2
Writing (7 <sup>th</sup> )	58.1	36.7 – 76.1	66.7 / 89.6
English Language Arts (7 <sup>th</sup> )	67.6	56.7 – 87.0	72.7 / 94.1

*How do our ACT scores compare?*

Subject	Hillsdale County	District Ranges	State/Top 10
Composite	21.5	20.2 – 22.8	21.4 / 24.5
English	20.8	18.8 – 22.6	20.5 / 24.1
Reading	22.0	20.7 – 22.8	21.7 / 24.8
Math	21.0	18.5 – 22.6	21.2 / 24.6
Science	21.8	20.9 – 23.3	21.6 / 24.1
Participation rate	48%	37% - 67%	53% / 81%



<i>Percent attending college?</i>	
Hillsdale Class of 2006 (fall 2006 survey)	63%
Hillsdale Class of 2007(intend to go to college)	93%
National Average (2004 data, U.S. Department of Education)	70%

<i>2007 Graduates</i>		
	Yes	No
Do you plan on attending college?	93%	7%
How well do you think your school is preparing you for the next phase of your life? (Based on a scale of 1-10)	7	
Are you currently enrolled or will you take an Advanced Placement Course this year?	31%	69%
Do you plan on taking the Advanced Placement test?	28%	72%
Are you currently enrolled or will you take Physics?	45%	55%
Are you currently enrolled or will you take Calculus?	37%	63%
Are you currently enrolled or will you take Chemistry?	57%	43%
Are you currently enrolled or will you take foreign language?	61%	39%

Schools of Choice	
2005	
Students attending another District in the County	678
Students from outside the Hillsdale County attending County Districts	148
Students attending a District outside Hillsdale County	308
Net Loss of students	160
Economic Loss to the County	\$1,171,520

## **NARRATIVE PROFILE: A Historical Perspective**

Even though original legislation in 1962 provided legal basis for development of intermediate districts in Michigan, each of the 57 ISD's have developed a unique profile based on its respective constituency. The foundation for services through the Hillsdale County Intermediate School District (HCISD) is derived through a rich historical collaborative culture. As evidenced through archival documents, the HCISD has been a state and national leader in the development of collaborative services and programs, targeting success for all students throughout Hillsdale County. Beginning with the mission statement, the HCISD has continued to maintain its roots in the collaboration process.

**The mission of the Hillsdale County Intermediate School District is to provide innovation, leadership, service, and support in a collaborative manner, for the benefit of students, families, and community.**

In concert with the mission statement, imbedded beliefs have been identified providing the foundation for functioning activities within the educational community.

The HCISD believes:

- In respect for human dignity
- That all people can learn
- In educational opportunities
- In recognizing individual differences
- Learning is a life-long learning process
- Education is interactive and evolving
- Education is a shared responsibility of the student, home, school, and community
- In a safe, supportive and unbiased learning environment
- Expectations affect behavior and achievement

These beliefs have been instrumental in the guidance of the HCISD both formally and informally throughout the years. Prior to the formal continuous improvement process, the HCISD had recognized the communities' needs to work together maximizing the resources within the rural county. Several milestones represent the transition from early thoughts of collaboration to the existing culture of imbedded collaborative efforts.

Even before its formal acceptance as The Hillsdale County Human Services Network (HSN) in 1985, independent collaboration had begun to show success, setting the stage for future activities. Through the HCISD, service agencies serving children throughout the county began to align services. Activities such as a common directory of services were developed. This later evolved into the county Yellow Pages of services. Originally in the forefront of services, then known as the Community Mental Health Department, the Department of Social Services began to gain notoriety in the area of collaboration. For instance, through the Department of Social Services, Hillsdale

County was recognized in their respective national publication Joining Forces. Soon to follow in 1993 was the national recognition provided through the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCRL). This audio service spotlighted national initiatives designed to maximize collaborative efforts in rural settings. Titled Every Child is the Communities Child, the audio presentation provided the introspective to the collaborative culture within Hillsdale County. For the next one-half decade the HCISD continued to work with its partners to develop programs serving the greater Hillsdale Community. The scope of the HSN grew to incorporate services to community constituents of all ages and varying needs, constantly reconfiguring its organization to achieve greater success in a larger arena. Now the HSN is comprised of over twenty-five formal agencies with many others as auxiliary participants. Then in 1998, the HCISD embarked on its journey to align with quality standards, processes and benchmarks.

The initial format was provided through the Cambridge Group. This resulted in the first official strategic plan developed by the HCISD in concert with constituents in November of 1991. Once again the HCISD received national exposure in the winter of 1995 through the publication The Strategic Planner for Education. Soon, a new era was to begin with the entrance of the Michigan Quality Council (MQC) into education. For the first time, the business quality improvement process was being modified and aligned for the educational community.

Movement in this area of quality collaboration was fast in picking-up momentum through the introduction of the Michigan Quality Council and the “Baldrige in Education” initiative supported by the Michigan Department of Education (MDE). Furthermore the addition of South Central Michigan Works (a state workforce/economic development agency) became one of two such collaborative partnerships in the State of Michigan. In 2004, HCISD was the first intermediate school district to bring a private educational facility (The Manor) into the public educational system. Some additional awards and activities are detailed below:

Date	Recognition	Recipient
1996	Hillsdale County ISD joins with South Central Michigan Works!	HCISD/SCMW!
1999	Quality Self-Awareness Session	HCISD
1999	Lighthouse Recognition (MQC)	HCISD
1999	Lighthouse Recognition (MQC) Lasting Impact 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Grant	Hillsdale County Schools
1999	Lighthouse Recognition (MQC)	HCSID
2000	Partner in the State BiE IN (Baldrige in Education Initiative)	HCISD
2000	Navigator Recognition (MQC)	HCISD
2000	Navigator Recognition (MQC) Lasting Impact 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Grant	Hillsdale County Schools
2001	RLTC Literacy Region 8 Consortium	Hillsdale, Jackson, Lenawee, Monroe, Washtenaw, and Wayne ISDs
2001	Hillsdale County Fiber Consortium (Seven district million dollar fiber build)	HCISD and local schools
2002	Lighthouse Recognition (MQC)	Hillsdale, Jackson, Lenawee, Monroe, Washtenaw
2002	Statement of Understanding (NCA Acceptance of Quality Process for accreditation)	HCISD, Reading Community Schools

2002	Lighthouse Recognition (MQC) Region 8 Service Collaboration	Hillsdale, Jackson, Lenawee, Monroe, and Washtenaw ISDs
2003	State Accepted Quality Standards based on School Improvement Application (Title I)	HCISD
2004	The Manor joins with the HCISD	HCISD/The Manor
2004	Establishment of Lochaven, A Center for Community Advancement	HCISD, local schools, Hillsdale County Probate Court
2006	Establishment of Educational Leadership Initiative	Hillsdale County schools and the community
2006	Distance Learning Initiative	Hillsdale County ISD, New York Times
2008	Multi-agency Fiber Consortium	Merit Network, HCISD, Hillsdale College
2009	Multi-agency Child Trauma Center	HCISD, Hillsdale County Probate Court, Hillsdale Community Mental Health Center, Hillsdale Community Health Center, Department of Social Services, Hillsdale Counselors, Foster Parents

Even though the language was shifting from the formal Baldrige or business nomenclature to education, the quality concepts were retained. This new era of quality in education was guided by three target areas (Key Business Results) which quickly became the benchmark for development and inclusion of new programs and services:

- Financial Sustainability
- Staff Efficiency/Effectiveness
- Customer Satisfaction

Within the past five years the HCISD has been led through the emergence of the Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI). This process has two main threads: service development and educational support.

The “service development” component brings together partners representing operational facets of the educational community. This is exemplified by transportation, food services, maintenance, technology, and business services. Through data study and alliances, the goal is to maximize expenditures by taking advantage of the larger numbers and opportunities. Present initiatives, such as the countywide transportation survey, technology software purchases, sharing of the superintendent by districts, sharing of business personnel, and cooperative purchasing programs have been key developments.

The “educational support” component also leverages a larger audience by bringing together representatives from not just the K-12 setting, but also the community colleges, universities, and interests groups such as special education. Additionally parent and student involvement is key to assisting the development of customer service in this group. Highlighted collaborative developments from this area include: the Distance Learning Initiative; the Great Parents Great Start Collaborative; Fiber Optics Fiber Consortium (fiber optics infra-structure development for the county schools); and the Lochaven Center for Community Advancement, a facility designed to serve the community through educational activities involving classroom studies, ropes team building courses and the arts.

Now in 2009 and approaching the twenty-fifth year of formal collaborative leadership, the HCISD is placing its foot one more time on a stepping stone. The formal review of services through the NCA/AdvancEd process provides one more benchmark. As this occurs the HCISD has maintained its focus on customer services both internal and external to the organization endeavoring to stay true to who we are and to whom we serve; our children and community.

## Hillsdale County Intermediate School District Strategic Planning

In November of 1991 the stage was being set for the Hillsdale County Intermediate School District to enter into the arena of strategic planning. Even though hand tallied, the first strategic planning session utilized formal data analysis to substantiate strategic direction.

The plans over the course of many years would be adapted. The format was modeled after other plans from organizations much as our own. Initial committee activities, from the first plan threaded through many others, included focus in areas such as: review of organizational structure; staff development; communication; service levels to local districts; least restrictive environment option for students; total quality management; plan dissemination; and resources development. In the years to come, names of the committees would change, but many of the fundamental concepts remained. In 2009 the founding principles have not been relinquished, but have been reinforced through a strategic system unique to the HCISD.

With the exception of one guiding committee, each of the areas developed time-enveloped activities. One committee, Total Quality Management (TQM), would become the foundation for services to both internal and external customer groups. Based on Deming's Principles, adapted into action for business through the Baldrige rubric, and then infused into education, words such as stakeholder, key business results, action plans and assessment rubrics would soon become common nomenclature.

As happens in many organizations, the HCISD in the late 90's and early 2000's was challenged to renew the past initiative and its critical importance to the new era of accountability. In 2005 the HCISD developed a local framework for strategic development, the Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI). The ELI integrated an action plan system and an activity-based approach to developing new services. Additionally, the foundation set by the original plan which had identified three key business results (financial sustainability, staff efficiency, and customer satisfaction) was not only maintained, but found an increased emphasis.

As stated earlier, the HCISD's strategic plan does not follow the course set by similar school entities. Even though there are internal district strategies such as staff communication, the HCISD does not view any activity as separated from needing to be viewed as part of a systemic process. The key is that design is "top down" and implementation is "bottom up." Exemplified in the axiom "The closer you are to the problem the closer you are to the answer." The challenge is to have the issues for consideration handled at the appropriate levels: classroom issues by teachers; clerical by secretaries; administrative concerns by administration; and policy by the Board of Education.

To achieve this paradigm, several processes were developed to assure maintenance and alignment.

- 1) Every "system" must have a mission statement. This identifies for the team and others the relationship of that "system" to the agency.
- 2) All mission statements must be in alignment with the district mission statement.
- 3) To assure accountability, requests such as new program development, classroom materials, and professional development activities must demonstrate alignment to both the "SIP system" and the "district" mission thus maintaining two threads. The first is the internal stakeholder, typified in the educational system. The second is the crossover from education to the community with the incorporation of the Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI). Even though as stated both are aligned to the district mission.

## See Attachment 1- School Improvement Design

While the mission statement component (top down) of the process provides the “umbrella of expectations,” the “implementation” component (bottom up) is structured through a series of aligned goal development.

Once the mission statements are established for each of the departments (teams) within the agency, data study determines specific team needs. Goals then are developed aligning to fulfillment of the district’s mission and action plans including strategies, timelines and accountabilities. Each departmental team is charged with assessment through data acquisition, evaluation of data, developing implementation goals, and evaluation effectiveness. Written many times and in varied formats, the cycle represents Deming’s model.

A system of checks and balances assuring departmental accountability to alignment is provided through administrative review of applications for activities. Several examples include requests for conferences which must be aligned to written goals. MedBill requests for expenditures must be approved by a review committee for alignment to the mission and goals. Classroom equipment must be in alignment with either departmental goals or individual student goals.

Ultimately, the driving force of all activities from the classroom to the Board level is student success. Individual student needs are combined to form a classroom goal. Classroom goals are then assessed to determine departmental goals. Departmental goals lead to inter-departmental goals.

Exemplifying of the process for establishing an inter-departmental goal is the para-professional staff. Each of the para-professionals joins their respective departments in establishing goals. However, there are common needs which transcend the individual departments. The para-professional staff meets to develop a conference based on their identified needs as a unique group.

Another unique aspect of the HCISD planning process is true commitment to continuous improvement. All mission statements and departmental goals are reviewed at a minimum of once a year. These goals are reviewed in the context of the district’s short- and long-term goals. These long range goals are determined to a large part by the external expectation placed on the district. In strategic planning terms, this would be the environmental scan. The HCISD has found the five-year update to be ineffective. Expectations are being augmented at such a fast pace, these reviews need to be on an annual basis, information and direction is coordinated from the Board to the classroom.

Examples would be the State development in special education of determination scores for each district. Each district, including the HCISD, is provided an effectiveness score based on State expectations. The district must adjust accordingly. With the changing expectations the district must, however, be able to change its systemic process such as it technological capacities to answer with appropriate data in a timely and accurate fashion. This then requires a goal such as a current district data mapping process, followed by staff training, etc. All must be in alignment to the mission statement and integrated into the system, department or team goal structure.



**Vision & Purpose**

**Standard Champion: John Ciaravino, Executive Director (31 yrs)**

**STANDARD:** The agency establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for the continuous improvement of the performance of learners and the effectiveness of the services being provided by the agency.

**Impact Statement:** An agency is successful in meeting this standard when it commits to a shared purpose and direction. The leadership establishes expectations for continuous improvement of student learning aligned with the agency’s vision that is supported by personnel and external constituents. These expectations serve as the focus for assessing learner performance and system effectiveness. The agency’s vision guides allocations of time as well as human, material, and fiscal resources.

INDICATORS		Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the agency:</b>					
1.1	Establishes a vision for the agency in collaboration with its constituents			<b>x</b>	
1.2	Communicates the vision and purpose to build constituent understanding and support			<b>x</b>	
1.3	Identifies goals and expectations to advance the vision			<b>x</b>	
1.4	Develops and continuously maintains a profile of the agency, its constituents and learners, and its community			<b>x</b>	
1.5	Ensures that the vision and purpose guide the formation and delivery of services that support teaching and learning			<b>x</b>	
1.6	Reviews its vision and purpose systematically and revises them when appropriate				<b>x</b>

**Overall Self Assessment Status for Vision & Purpose:**

Not Evident       Emerging       **Operational**       Highly Functional

*Focus Questions*

**What is the process for establishing and building understanding of and commitment to the vision statement among the agency and constituents?**

The existing mission statement for the Hillsdale County Intermediate School District is to provide innovation, leadership, service, and support in a collaborative manner, for the benefit of students, families, and community. This has been the guiding light spanning over twenty years.

The earliest formal result of the HCISD commitment to the key process elements of the mission statement, services and collaboration were exemplified with the initiation of the Hillsdale County

Human Services Network (HSN). This organization, started in 1985, has withstood the test of time and change, reaching an agency membership close to twenty-five.

From this initial effort, the HCISD has worked through many collaborative initiatives, the most recent The Hillsdale County Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI). Both initiatives mentioned here have received state- and national-level attention in their effectiveness in both process and agency effectiveness. These activities, as well as the ones transitioning between, indicate the cultural commitment to maintaining the true intent of the HCISD mission.

Within the district, processes of imbedded activities and checks assuring both personnel and financial resources are focused on student success. The mission statement is included on all forms or financial applications which are accessible to staff. These include MedBill applications, school improvement funds, financial support for conference and training activities, and material and supply purchases. All applications for expenditures must be approved based upon alignment with the departmental as well as the district mission statement.

The departmental mission statements represent a bridge between the instructional personnel alignment of direct services to the district's umbrella mission statement. Individual personnel mission statements then complete the connection to the goals developed for students which are articulated through the special education IEPC process or as an IDP for students in the vocational education domain.

**Describe the agency's process for systematically and continuously maintaining and using information that describes the agency, its programs and services, and agency effectiveness and constituents' performance.**

The sustainability of the "system" is exemplified by the longevity of the mission which spans over twenty years and four top executives. Concurrent with the change is also the stability of effort, continually working as a district with its constituents to adapt and provide resources internally, as well as within the community at large. No matter what the mission or designed activities, the final measure must be rooted in achieving student success. If the organizational design is created "top down" then implementation is "bottom up." The design for accountability to the system was delineated in the first focus question. Here we are providing assurance and accountability to our primary customer, the student.

Accountability to the student begins with the State of Michigan articulated Grade Level Content Expectations (GLCEs). These content expectations provide the basis to articulate generally expected student achievement to individual performance levels. As individual student plans are made for special education students, the instructors then are able to define classroom requirements. This then is used to target activities such as training, materials, and resources deployment matching the student needs. As previously expressed, this is the foundation for alignment to the personnel requests for activities, supplies, and equipment.

Once the instructor has identified classroom needs, the departmental school improvement process (SIP) articulates needs at this level. An example: The instructors for the classrooms for Emotionally Impaired (EI) students determine a common need to increase skills in the area of reading instruction. In-service trainings are developed to the groups' requirements. As this occurs, respective departments are surveyed, through Leadership Team Meetings, regarding the potential for similar training. If so the trainings are expanded, or at least offered on a district level. Occasionally,

the agency perceives a larger need such as training on Blood Borne Pathogens, a State requirement. In these cases all internal stakeholders would be provided the training.

**How does the leadership ensure that the agency’s vision, purpose, and goals guide the agency?**

The establishment of the Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI) is currently guiding the agency’s long-range planning. The ELI’s two main components: the educational support and the service development are driven by a diverse community team of 13 members all with areas of expertise both in and out of education. The vision of the team serves as a barometer of the educational and related support services impacting student success. The ELI, now in its third year, is structured to seek input from all areas in the county. The ELI has yielded modest gains to date including: two districts sharing a superintendent; ITV classes; and the purchase of Skyward, a student information package. With the present economic conditions in the State of Michigan and Hillsdale County, the ELI will continue to play an important role in strategic planning and collaborative actions. Within the HCISD a strong commitment to developing an “improvement culture” with common SIP language and processes is a goal. Agency participation in NCA/AdvancEd serves this goal. From the process implemented thus far SIP teams have worked to align curriculum and assessment, study the impact of data, and provide better communication. Two agency goals derived from the SIP process include an agency communication plan and a data mapping project

**What process is used to ensure that the vision and purpose of the agency remain current and aligned with the agency’s expectations in support of student learning and agency effectiveness?**

Strategic planning is ongoing and becoming more consistent in our agency. Perhaps the most growth has come in the areas of data study, aligning, and monitoring of activities as they relate to student success. SIP teams review SIP progress at regularly scheduled meetings. The HCISD does not operate in isolation. Due to our collaborative nature we work closely with our constituent districts to determine countywide needs. Several examples of collaborative planning continue to serve as a strategic planning model for meeting the emerging needs of the local LEAs. The HCISD plays a major role in the direction and implementation of well designed strategies. The current elementary writing collaborative is a prime example. After reviewing the most current academic data the countywide elementary principals sought strategies to improve writing scores. The HCISD facilitated the planning and the sessions which serve over 80 (60%) of the K-5 teachers in the county. Also after review of county special education determination scores, the HCISD employed the same planning model with our locals to in-service all special education teachers to better understand the principles behind the determination scores.

Strategic planning also guides decision-making with regard to allocation of resources and establishment of policies and procedures. Our growing culture of improvement recognizes that complete strategic planning is not an end and monitoring and assessing activities though the collection of data also enhances planning.

## Governance & Leadership

Standard Champion: Robert Henthorne HCISD Superintendent (7 yrs)

**STANDARD:** The agency provides governance and leadership that promote the continuous improvement of the performance of learners and agency effectiveness.

**Impact Statement:** An agency is successful in meeting this standard when its leaders advocate for the agency’s vision and improvement efforts. The leaders provide direction and allocate resources to implement services and programs that enable staff and students to achieve expectations for their learning. Leaders function with clearly defined authority and responsibility and encourage collaboration and shared responsibility for improvement among constituents. The agency’s policies, procedures, and organizational conditions ensure advocacy for quality of learning and support for innovation.

INDICATORS		Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the agency operates under the jurisdiction of a governing authority that:</b>					
2.1	Establishes policies and procedures that provide for the effective operation of the agency, including fiscal oversight				<b>x</b>
2.2	Recognizes and preserves the executive, administrative, and leadership prerogatives of the administrative head of the agency				<b>x</b>
2.3	Ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws, standards, and regulations				<b>x</b>
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the agency has leaders who:</b>					
2.4	Implement policies and procedures that provide for the orientation and training of the governing authority			<b>x</b>	
2.5	Build public support, secure sufficient resources, and act as a steward of the agency resources				<b>x</b>
2.6	Maintain access to legal counsel to advise or obtain information about legal requirements and obligations				<b>x</b>
2.7	Maintain adequate insurance or equivalent resources to protect its financial security and administrative operations				<b>x</b>
2.8	Provide for systematic analysis and review of constituent performance, including student performance data, and agency effectiveness			<b>x</b>	
2.9	Create and support collaborative networks of constituents to support agency programs				<b>x</b>
2.10	Provide direction, assistance, and resources to align, support, and enhance all parts of the agency in meeting organizational, constituent, and/or learner performance goals			<b>x</b>	
2.11	Provide agency staff and constituents meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership			<b>x</b>	

2.12	Assess and address constituent expectations		<b>x</b>		
2.13	Implement an evaluation system that provides for the professional growth of all agency personnel			<b>x</b>	

**Overall Self Assessment Status for Governance & Leadership:**

Not Evident       Emerging      **X Operational**       Highly Functional

***Focus Questions***

**What is the process for establishing, communicating, and implementing policies and procedures for the effective operation of the agency?**

Several processes are used in developing a policy structure designed to ensure compliance for the agency in key operational functions, as well as policy implementation standards articulated in administrative guidelines developed for consistent and systemic solutions to administrative challenges.

In establishing policy and developing subsequent administrative guidelines to support policy, the agency employs several systemic methods and contracts with a service named NEOLA.

1. This service specializes in reviewing legal requirements for all public entities, focused primarily on public schools, through a legal division comprised of a team of attorneys who review legal mandates and who then craft language for appropriate policies reflecting those mandates. Synchronic to this process is also a post-development process to ensure all previously developed policies are reviewed and appropriately rewritten to reflect new mandates and to employ planned extinction for those policies whose usefulness has expired. The actual review and passage of policies by this organization’s board of directors is highlighted as follows:
  - a) HCISD receives a draft copy of policies from NEOLA via US mail. These are forwarded to the superintendent by his/her secretary.
  - b) The superintendent then meets with the NEOLA representative to review drafts and choose appropriate options, selecting from choices about who in the organization is responsible for specific oversight.
  - c) The NEOLA representative takes completed drafts back to NEOLA and arranges for a board-presentable version to be mailed to the HCISD.
  - d) Once the board-presentable version of the NEOLA policies is received, they are forwarded to the Superintendent by his/her secretary, and reviewed by the board president for any additional changes.
  - e) After changes, the policies are copied to the Superintendent, directors, and presented for a “first reading” to the Board at the next regularly scheduled meeting.
  - f) One month later, the “second reading” takes place and the policies are formally adopted by the Board.
  - g) Communication takes place back to NEOLA after policies have been formally adopted as to which policies have been adopted.
  - h) Adopted policies are placed in the Bylaws notebook.
  - i) On July 1 of each year, all newly adopted policies are copied to both union presidents.
  
2. The superintendent reviews policy issues with the superintendents of the Region 8 and the

Michigan Association of Intermediate School Districts to compare notes and ensure compliance on a regional basis. There is not a set schedule, but rather done on an as-needed basis.

3. All newly developed and amended policies are included in the board packet of the HCISD each time a policy is adopted or amended. This packet document is automatically forwarded to the union presidents of the support and professional staff. It is also forwarded to local press and updated on a key-word searchable data base linked with the HCISD web-page.

**What process does the agency’s leadership use to evaluate overall agency effectiveness and the agency’s impact on student performance?**

Leadership of the Hillsdale County Intermediate School District uses a variety of measures to evaluate effectiveness including a systemic process aligned through our mission and goals, and the purposeful culture of the agency to impact student success.

It should first be noted that “student” can be defined in two ways for this organization: 1) Students attending programs offered by the HCISD for students who have been placed in center-based educational environments based upon specific needs identified through the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) process. These students receive direct services from HCISD staff including instruction, speech, psychological services, occupational and physical therapy, nursing, assistance with instructional and physical assistance devices, and a full continuum of services focused not necessarily upon learning new information, but often centered upon physical life issues; and 2) Students attending a public school district in Hillsdale County. These students receive instruction and support from local educational agency (LEA) staff. Curriculum, pedagogy, behavioral standards and all aspects of the traditional teaching/learning paradigm are sponsored and delivered at the LEA level with support from the HCISD. Support from the HCISD includes professional development, curriculum alignment activities, attendance policies, and learning disabled support through itinerant speech, psychology, physical therapy services, and behavioral planning.

Measures to determine the effectiveness of systems include reviewing standardized test results for all students articulated above. These scores are tabulated in a variety of ways and reviewed on a regular basis with principals, instructors and board members on a countywide basis. The effectiveness of curriculum priorities, pedagogical skills of staff, staff development, scheduling, sharing resources for optimal opportunity and administrative oversight are all included in these formal discussions.

Additional measurement is ascertained through individual goals for students in category #1 above such as knowing the difference between inside and outside the circle, being able to effectively use an assistive device such as a wheelchair or a hearing aid, or learning to take steps independently. Since the handicaps of these children are severe it is important to note that many determiners of effectiveness are employed beyond the traditional standardized test. The system holds each instructor accountable to coordinate appropriate goals with itinerant staff and then employ a variety of techniques for the attainment of those goals.

The leadership at this level provides staff appropriate direction and holds staff accountable by reviewing student progress as measured against their specific individual educational goals and standards.

**In what ways are constituents, including agency staff, given opportunities to provide leadership and to contribute to the decision-making process?**

Collaborative leadership and decision making are true points of pride for this agency. As a systemic approach to directing the organization and participating in the continual revision of the agency's strategies to accomplish its mission, we employ a variety of methods to seek meaningful input from staff and constituents.

Through the Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI), which is a multi-faceted initiative to foster collaboration to reduce expenditures and increase opportunities for students, an Executive Leadership Team has been established. This team, comprised of representatives from local districts, the court system, local business, unions, school boards and administration is key in providing leadership and offering input in the decision making process. This team uses specific data elements when crafting decisions and suggesting specific recommendations to other boards and constituents.

The establishment of the ELI is receiving high acclaim throughout the State and, in fact, resulted in a new Public Act requiring all ISD/ESA's in the State to conduct similar processes. The superintendent has made multiple presentations regarding this innovative initiative locally, regionally and at the state and national levels. He was awarded a Winners' Circle Award by the Michigan Association of School Administrators in 2007, and has been a frequent guest speaker at numerous constituent meetings as a result of the initiative.

The HCISD has a well-managed Leadership Team comprised of appointed staff representation from all departments who meet monthly to discuss, brain-storm, and make recommendations. The team seeks input from constituent staff members in each department and focuses attention on improving the organization through team-spirited deliberation. This team has been instrumental in offering input to administration to address issues such as staff scheduling, the image of the agency, school improvement processes, and more.

Each department of the HCISD meets on a regular basis to discuss issues and options for the maximization of resources. These meetings, and the recommendations coming from them, are key to the advancement of the organization. Within each department, regular meetings are held with staff sharing similar work-place disciplines. These meetings are specifically designed to seek input from staff regarding leadership and decision making processes within the organization.

Additionally each department recognizes "teams" within their scope who meet no fewer than four times a year to discuss needs, plan, implement, and monitor SIP activities in their area assuring student success.

The superintendent regularly holds "Open Forums" for any staff and board of directors' members who would like to attend. These are informal meetings where staff can ask questions of the superintendent and offer ideas for improving the organization. Response to these forums has been excellent with staff indicating an appreciation for the opportunity for input.

The superintendent and executive director meet monthly with union presidents to discuss leadership and decision making. These meetings have been taking place for over ten years. Many times, a potential problem is solved as a result of regular face-to-face meetings. The organization prides itself in the true partnership between administration and union.

A School Board Advisory Council, representing one designated school board member from each constituent district, meeting takes place quarterly. The superintendent of the HCISD hosts and facilitates these meetings. The agenda is educational leadership from a policy perspective. Input from this group is communicated to all board members and superintendents in the county.

The public school system of the county, sponsored and facilitated by the HCISD, has a superintendents' association chaired by local superintendents on a rotating basis, which meets monthly. Similarly, elementary principals, secondary principals and counselors have their own respective organizations that meet monthly. All of these meetings lead to advanced collaboration, the sharing of ideas, and leadership and decision making within the county relative to curriculum, staffing, scheduling, executive administration and more.

The HCISD superintendent serves on and has been twice chair of the county Human Services Network (HSN), serves on the Hillsdale County Community Foundation, the Hillsdale County Planning Commission, the City of Hillsdale Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA) Advisory Council, the senate majority leaders' Educational Advisory Panel, and has testified to the Educational Committee of the State House of Representatives. All of these activities are centered on one basic tenet; to seek input regarding educational leadership issues and decision making. An expression held dear to this organization is that "it's all in the relationship." We incorporate this principle in everything we do understanding that shared leadership and decision making leads to a more productive and successful organization.

**What policies and processes are in place to ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation?**

Policies and processes to ensure equity of learning opportunities and support for innovation are embedded in two specific document sets: 1) The HCISD Policy Manual, which reflects all policies including those related to equity; and 2) The HCISD administrative guidelines and procedures, which are reviewed annually specifically for the purpose of supporting innovation.

Administration sets a high priority of equity and support for innovation through not only the documents articulated above, but also through engaging in a purposeful culture of support for new and innovative ideas, programs and services.



## Teaching & Learning

### Standard Area Champions

Kevin Leonard, Career and Technical Education Center Director (8 yrs)

Rhonda Eves, Greenfield School Principal Special Education Supervisor (11 yrs)

Charlotte Cole, PhD Renaissance School Teacher/Director (22 yrs)

**STANDARD:** The agency promotes and supports research-based curriculum and instructional methods that enable constituents to facilitate achievement for all learners.

**Impact Statement:** An agency is successful in meeting this standard when it promotes and supports curricula based on clearly defined, rigorous, and appropriately challenging expectations for student learning that provide opportunities for all learners to acquire essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The agency advocates for the use of proven instructional practices that actively engage students in the learning process; provide opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills to real world situations; and give learners feedback to improve their performance.

INDICATORS		Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the agency:</b>					
3.1	Promotes and supports curricula based on clearly defined expectations for student learning, including essential knowledge and skills			x	
3.2	Supports student engagement in the learning process, including opportunities for students to demonstrate higher order thinking skills and investigate new approaches to apply their learning			x	
3.3	Advocates that curricular and instructional decisions be based on data and research at all levels			x	
3.4	Supports instruction that is research-based and reflective of best practice and aligned with instructional goals		x		
3.5	Supports curricula that challenges and meets the needs of each student, reflects a commitment of equity, and demonstrates an appreciation of diversity.			x	
3.6	Promotes the maximum use of instructional time to support learning			x	
3.7	Facilitates articulation among and between all levels of schooling to monitor student performance and readiness for future schooling or employment			x	
3.8	Supports the articulation and alignment of teaching practices, instructional support and resources, and assessments of student learning with the curriculum		x		
3.9	Supports the implementation of interventions to help students meet expectations for learning			x	
3.10	Models a climate that supports teaching and learning				x

3.11	Advocates that curricula be reviewed, evaluated, and revised based on data and/or at regular intervals		<b>x</b>		
3.12	Promotes integration of instructional technology, information and media services, and materials for effective instruction and innovative practices		<b>x</b>		

**Overall Self Assessment Status for Teaching & Learning:**

Not Evident       Emerging       **Operational**       Highly Functional

*Focus Questions*

**How does the agency promote and support the alignment and articulation of curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments in support of the agency’s and constituents’ expectations for student learning?**

The agency’s academic programs in general, special, and career and technical education are anchored to the mission of “assuring student success.” Student success in the diverse programs offered by the HCISD is measured differently from program to program.

HCISD programs align to the standards-driven Michigan Curriculum Framework (MCF). Adjustments are made according to individual student and program goals. In Special Education programs are aligned to Addressing Unique Education Needs of Students with Disabilities (AUEN). Special education programs implement an Individual Education Plan (IEP) strategy with clear objectives and schedules for assessment for each identified student. Students with transition IEP’s demonstrate agreement and alignment between the student’s post secondary goals and current educational opportunities to reach those goals.

The personnel of the HCISD Early On program for students from birth to three years of age work collaboratively with the personnel of the Early Childhood Pre-school program (ages three to five), to align curriculum to State of Michigan endorsed programs and create a seamless transition from one program to the next. This partnership between the two programs has demonstrated tremendous growth in the area of student referrals and aligned sequential services provided by the agency.

All Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs are certified by the State of Michigan and cross walked with the State of Michigan content area standards and benchmarks where applicable. Additionally, all CTE programs have active articulation agreements with local community colleges that afford students college credit opportunities.

Both formative and summative assessment tests are administered yearly in all programs to measure student progress as required and needed. All special education students take the Michigan MEAP or Mi ACCESS test according to their written IEP. Some eligible high school aged students take the Michigan Merit Examination (MME) which includes an ACT strand. Students in CTE programs also take the standardized Work Keys test. All students receive progress reports at regular intervals throughout the school year and parent teacher conferences are hosted twice a year. Students placed in agency-sponsored alternative programs including the Renaissance School have entrance and exit criteria processes. Individual student goals in this program are coordinated and progress is shared with the student’s home school district.

Researched-based instructional strategies are aligned to the Michigan Curriculum Framework (MCF) and designed and implemented based upon program outcomes and individual needs of students within the program. All programs have additional academic support through a variety of ancillary services and tutoring for students with identified special learning needs.

Staff determines professional development needs through the SIP process and aligns activities, such as: attendance at yearly conferences/visitations for updates; training in curriculum, state program requirements; and “best practices” specific to their program areas.

Curriculum development is ongoing and an integral part of SIP planning for each program. Staff is using assessments more efficiently to drive academic decisions and is examining more formative testing methods including implementation of performance tasks for every program. Further discussion of college articulation opportunities for all career and technical students has enhanced curriculum.

Meeting all state transition requirements with regard to low incidence populations is an area of continuous study for our agency. Developing a tool to collect and review perceptual data pertaining to curriculum is a strategy to be implemented. Also due to the limited size of some programs, decisions have to be made based upon teacher skills and personality traits. As programs expand and resources become tighter the need to implement a systems approach for the development of new programs is needed.

**In what ways does the agency promote, support, and build constituent capacity for the implementation of research-based instructional strategies, innovations, and activities that facilitate achievement for all students?**

Our agency philosophically believes, encourages, and promotes a variety of aligned and sustained staff development activities. One strategy, which affords staff ownership, aligns staff development to specialty areas through the SIP process. Part of the established criteria for staff development is based on individual student or program needs, aligned to measurable goals and implemented in a timely fashion. All activities are aligned to research and best practice. During planning for the Renaissance School, a middle school aged alternative education program, the design and development process was based on best practice and research. This design model has thus been used to build other programs. Staff is encouraged to acquire advanced certification or degrees at the university level. Specific training for HCISD support staff to assist teaching staff with techniques to assist students with special learning needs including differentiated instruction and crisis prevention training (CPI) demonstrate an agency commitment to research-based best practice in all HCISD programs. Additionally, an agency induction program with an assigned mentor-teacher supports new staff. When needed, consultants either within or outside of the HCISD staff are utilized by administration and staff to support best practice. Additionally all CTE programs implementing State of Michigan Career and Technical Education Segments and Curriculum are established through research by the State’s Office of Career and Technical Preparation. Our most valuable resource is the ongoing alignment of curriculum exercises by all departments and the collegial dialogue that results.

The HCISD must look at incentive-based staff development where that collegial spirit of learning and sharing information is recognized and can be implemented around researched-best practices. An emphasis in the area of identifying staff development resources and a central housing site and availability of resource protocols should be established to promote professional learning.

Expanding staff opportunities by identifying gap (need) areas of professional preparation through different media, arts, and technology to improve student learning is also an area for growth. Staff understands the SIP model with the basic tenets of “plan, do, assess, evaluate.”

**What processes are implemented to ensure that agency staff is qualified and continue to be well prepared to fulfill their duties and responsibilities?**

All HCISD employees are hired with the matching qualifications needed to complete the job assignment. The employee contract requires that all professional and support staff engages in five staff/professional development days per school year. HCISD departments and SIP teams are encouraged to assist in the design of staff development activities. For example: The agency’s para-professionals have developed and implemented professional development activities specific to their group including a support staff conference titled Investing in Excellence: Empowering Para Professionals. Individual professional development goals are established with staff and training educational development plans EDPs are aligned to meet professional goals (minimum of three per year).

Staff has the opportunity to attend yearly conferences and enroll in courses enhancing their learning and expertise. Opportunities for staff to visit other programs demonstrating best practices are encouraged. HCISD collaborates with other local entities to offer appropriate professional development training. In addition, CTE programs have advisory committees to assist in keeping program training “work world” relevant and assist instructors with their skill/knowledge assessment to meet business expectations. As per the HCISD contract all program staff are observed and evaluated. This process allows for aligned professional growth. The agency SIP process supports the employee’s ownership of professional development.

Still areas for growth remain including: establishing links to other HCISD programs; training specific to those who work with multi-agency systems; consistent staff understanding of SIP processes and protocols; and assisting professional growth in areas of student centered attitudes and professionalism.

**How does the agency provide technical assistance and promote and support access to comprehensive information, instructional technology, and media services for all learners?**

HCISD is very committed to instructional technology. All programs have access to basic and advanced technology, if needed. Computer labs are available in some buildings for staff and student projects. Technology is used by all staff and students for gathering needed reference materials, research topics, and instructional use. It is used for communication between parents, schools, and the other agencies. Internet access is monitored and available for every student and staff member. Each staff member has their own professional work station. Laptops are available within some programs for staff and student use.

Instructional technology is enhanced by the support of the technology department which is proactive and open to change although aligned by the SIP process. Staff is made aware of technology available to aid them instructionally or professionally. Recently CTESTAR and Skyward software training has been implemented for staff to proficiently use the technology. Training for staff in the area of trouble shooting and technology requests are available through system wide written and electronic communicated responses. Training for the Technology Staff in educational philosophy and customer service has increased accessibility to computers/technology for all staff

and students, especially for students lacking access. Still a need exists for a check out system of HCISD owned computers to meet all students' needs.

**Documenting & Using Results**

**Content Area Champion: Pat Dillon, General Education Supervisor (8yrs)**

**STANDARD:** The agency enacts a comprehensive system of organizational evaluation that monitors and documents performance and uses these results to improve the agency’s effectiveness.

**Impact Statement:** An agency is successful in meeting this standard when it uses a comprehensive system of organizational evaluation based on clearly defined performance measures. The evaluation system is used to assess the agency’s performance based on its goals and expectations; to identify gaps in performance; to evaluate the effectiveness of its services; and to determine strategies for improvement. The evaluation system yields timely and accurate information that is meaningful and useful to agency leaders, staff and constituents in understanding the agency’s effectiveness in support of the continuous improvement of student learning.

INDICATORS		Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the agency:</b>					
4.1	Establishes and implements a comprehensive system of organizational evaluation, aligned with the agency’s goals and expectations for service, that yields information which is reliable, valid and bias free			<b>x</b>	
4.2	Uses student assessment data to make decisions for the delivery of services to improve teaching and learning			<b>x</b>	
4.3	Conducts a systematic analysis of effectiveness, including support systems, and uses the results to improve agency performance			<b>x</b>	
4.4	Provides a system of communication which uses a variety of methods to report agency effectiveness to all constituents			<b>x</b>	
4.5	Uses comparison and trend data from comparable systems to evaluate the agency’s effectiveness			<b>x</b>	
4.6	Demonstrates verifiable growth in effectiveness that is supported by multiple sources of evidence			<b>x</b>	

**Overall Self Assessment Status for Documenting & Using Results:**

Not Evident      Emerging       **Operational**      Highly Functional

*Focus Questions*

**Describe how the system of organizational evaluation is currently used in your agency to guide analysis of changes in organizational effectiveness?**

The HCISD use a variety of data sources including demographic, academic, and perceptual to ensure system effectiveness. Data sources directly or indirectly aiding analyses of student success include a variety of surveys, collaborative focus groups, teacher and ancillary staff input, as well as formative

and summative academic measures related to the effectiveness of student success, specific programs and agency effectiveness.

The HCISD works well with constituent districts to review many academic data sources. State level summative assessments MEAP, Mi ACCESS and MME are given annually. Such data is processed and made available to the LEAs by the HCISD to share both collaboratively and individually with each district for the purposes of assessing common gaps, identifying improvement areas, documenting expectations of student performance and developing a strategic plan including identification of resources and staff development. Examples of this practice would be the current writing initiative at the elementary level, the countywide quarterly assessment project, and the countywide professional development day known as “Fair Day” in conjunction with the annual county fair. Additionally, our special education department has ramped up its awareness of data and resources. CIMS (Continuous Improvement Monitoring System) is a web based monitoring system used to determine if educational programs, instructional strategies, supplementary aides, services and transition services (prescribed in IEP) have been consistently implemented and are compliant with state guidelines. Based on these results (determination scores), the HCISD has led the county to review its special education practices. During the 2008-09 school year strategies to improve district determination scores are being implemented.

The HCISD also collects, submits and uses data from multiple sources to gather demographic information including the Center for Education Performance and Information (CEPI) about Michigan’s K-12 public schools. This data facilitates school district’s compliance with No Child Left Behind (NCLB). An HCISD-commissioned study in 2006 by Plante Moran provides the direction for the Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI) which looks closely at our county educational needs in terms of programming and enrollment.

**What are you doing to ensure that results of the agency’s organizational evaluation system are timely, relevant, and communicated in a way that can be used by the agency and its constituents and other stakeholders to aid the performance of individual learners?**

The HCISD hosts several collaborative monthly meetings that are both informational and strategic and involve several HCISD teams including: the HCISD administrative team; an HCISD leadership team which represents all areas of the organization; and SIP teams. The agency employs the same practice with all local constituents including boards of education, local superintendents, elementary, middle and high school principals, countywide school counselors, and input from content specific teams. Additional collaborations with the ELI and Special Education’s Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and each CTE program advisory council and other community focus groups as well, determine areas of need and provide a framework for our ability to communicate in a timely and relevant manner. Each group/team has its own mission statement, meeting norms, and personalities. Meeting reminders are sent and each meeting is monitored and evaluated and the results are disseminated at the appropriate collaborative monthly meetings. Recent developments of this practice include targeted and well designed staff development, including our monthly New Teacher Academy (NTA) and a county commitment to distance learning offerings via interactive television; a district wide communication plan and a countywide transportation study, countywide purchasing, and a data mapping initiative presently underway.

## **How are data used to understand and improve student learning and overall agency effectiveness?**

The HCISD expects all inter agency SIP teams to review student data on a regular basis as part of their culture. Each team is allowed in addition to the five required staff development days two additional professional development days per year to plan and monitor improvement progress toward determining student success.

All HCISD students - Greenfield School and HCISD local programs - are required to have a yearly IEP involving the IEP planning team including an administrator, ancillary staff, classroom teacher and parent.

The HCISD has led our county and constituent districts in many data related initiatives including the development of quarterly assessments and most recently training in both MLPP and DIBELS and presently with assessing student writing using both Six Trait Writing and Calkins Writing. All decisions to provide aforementioned programs are a result of collaborative data study at the county principal level to determine countywide student needs

Through the use of many different data sources, we evaluate our effectiveness for both individual programs and overall agency effectiveness. When working with our constituents, either consulting or assisting, the HCISD always solicits constructive feedback for areas of improvement both as individuals and representatives of our agency. All meetings and professional development activities sponsored by the HCISD are evaluated by participants. These evaluations are reviewed and adjustments made. The HCISD has used a variety of surveys to gather perceptual data. Surveys related to program and agency effectiveness have been used with students, parents and community customers.

Staff evaluations and the development of individual Education Development Plans (EDP) have proven useful in improving individuals, programs and agency effectiveness.

Two of the HCISD most vital partners are South Central Michigan Works! (SCMW) and Jackson Community College (JCC), both provide us with multiple sources of data to help develop, monitor, and sustain resources.

## **How is agency staff trained to understand and use data in agency and constituency effectiveness?**

The HCISD in 2006 identified our agency's SIP goal developed from the Michigan School Improvement Framework document focusing on data and data collection. We began the year with an all agency staff development activity from a neighboring ISD consultant on the topic of data. We encouraged and challenged each SIP team to inventory the data they used to drive their decision making. A sub goal for the year was to build a "data culture" where everyone in the agency focused on using relevant data to drive their decision making around student success. Now, as part of our SIP process, teams are encouraged to use data to identify program needs. Once the data study is completed and a need is identified the SIP team will then create and align goals and develop strategies to meet those goals which are associated with the data study/need statement exercise. Additionally, each SIP team will look at areas specific to them for data training such as IEP writer training as part of their own EDP.



The HCISD encourages staff development opportunities both within the agency and to its constituents to increase understanding of data driven decision making leading to increased accountability and targeted student success goals. We work to integrate a data-driven mentality throughout our agency. The HCISD is confident that it is moving in the right direction regarding a “data culture,” still we have work to do. However, data-driven decision making practices are modeled within our organization and with constituents.

## Resource & Support Systems

Standard Champions: Joseph “JC” Morris, Technology Supervisor (8 yrs)

Belinda Shaffer, Director of Business and Finance (12 yrs)

**STANDARD:** The agency has the resources necessary to support its vision and purpose and to ensure the delivery of services and programs that support all learners.

**Impact Statement:** An agency is successful in meeting this standard when it deploys sufficient human, material, and fiscal resources to implement programs and services that support teaching and learning and constituent services. The agency employs and allocates staff that is well qualified for their assignments. The agency provides ongoing learning opportunities for all staff to improve their effectiveness. The agency ensures compliance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations.

INDICATORS		Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the agency:</b>					
5.1	Establishes and implements processes to recruit, employ, retain, and mentor qualified professional and support staff to fulfill assigned roles and responsibilities			x	
5.2	Establishes and implements a process to assign professional and support staff based on agency needs and staff qualifications as may be required by federal and state law and regulations (i.e., professional preparation, ability, knowledge, and experience), if applicable			x	
5.3	Establishes and implements a process to design, evaluate, and improve professional learning and ensures participation by all staff		x		
5.4	Ensures that staff are sufficient in number to meet the vision and purpose of the agency and to meet federal and state law and regulations, if applicable			x	
5.5	Engages in long-range budgetary planning and annually budgets sufficient resources to support its programs and services and to implement its plan for continuous improvement				x
5.6	Ensures that all financial transactions are safeguarded through proper budgetary procedures and audited accounting measures				x
5.7	Maintains sites, facilities, services, and equipment to provide a safe, orderly, and healthy environment				x
5.8	Establishes and implements written security and crisis management plans with appropriate training for all agency staff			x	
5.9	Implements processes and plans for maintaining and improving sites, facilities, and equipment			x	
5.10	Provides technology infrastructure and equipment that is up to date, accessible, and sufficient to accomplish the agency’s goals and meet constituents’ needs				x
5.11	Promotes support services that meet the health,				x

	counseling, nutrition, safety, co-curricular, transportation, and special learning needs of all learners				
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**Overall Self Assessment Status for Resource & Support Systems:**

Not Evident       Emerging       **Operational**       Highly Functional

*Focus Questions*

**What is the process for recruitment, induction, placement, continuous development, evaluation, and retention of qualified agency professional and support staff?**

HCISD personnel wear many hats, so quality hiring practices are critical and become everyone's responsibility. Every effort to recruit, hire, employ and retain the most qualified personnel, whether they come from within the organization or become part of the organization from a constituent district or are new to us, the “right fit” for both the employee and HCISD is important.

The HCISD employs a strategic process for filling all positions within the agency. HCISD ensures sufficient staffing by following all federal and state laws and regulations. Directors submit a detailed job description including the certification and/or degree requirements and detailed job description to the Personnel Department.

All openings are posted on the HCISD website and advertised internally first through personnel payroll notification. One week later the opening is sent to local and regional newspapers, South Central Michigan Works! career services and other professional job posting services when applicable. All qualified candidates go through a two step, panel interview process followed by a personal welcome interview with the program director and the superintendent. All new employees are subject to federal and state security and background checks, as well as fingerprint identification, handled through the Hillsdale County Sheriff's Department.

Following the hiring process, all new employees are given an orientation which includes a brief video on health & safety guidelines and procedures, a copy of the new employee handbook including all tax submission forms, Internet/Network Acceptable Usage policy, blood-borne pathogen guidelines and an overview of the HCISD mission and beliefs. Employees are also directed to the HCISD website and the online staff handbook, containing copies of all policies and acceptable procedures of employment, all applicable forms and schedules, and all rights granted to employees by the State of Michigan.

The HCISD requires all employees to meet state and federal requirements for teaching assignments and to provide documented proof of their “Highly Qualified” status as an instructor within the field of their respective hire. The HCISD also monitors, through the Personnel Department, teacher certification status. Documentation of all employee qualifications are maintained in the employee's personnel records as well as provided to the State of Michigan Department of Education Registry of Employee Personnel (REP) reporting system. New teachers must attend monthly HCISD sponsored countywide New Teacher Academy (NTA) sessions and are assigned a mentor-teacher who has demonstrated proficiency in the area of teaching or other applicable skill as prescribed by the state school code.

In addition all employees are evaluated on a regular scheduled basis by their supervisor. Those evaluations along with SIP participation allow employees to create both individual education development plans (EDP) and departmental strategies. If additional training or courses are completed, transcripts or certificates of completion are also submitted to the Personnel Department. Occasional issues regarding renewal of certification, a failure on the employee's part to maintain required status has resulted in dismissal. A recent assistive strategy was developed within the Personnel Department to monitor and notify employees of certification obligations.

**How does the leadership ensure that the allocation of financial resources is supportive of the agency's vision, programs, services, and its plans for continuous improvement?**

The Hillsdale Intermediate School District (HCISD) is recognized as a leader within Hillsdale County in the areas of human resources, finance and information technology. The agency departments provide improved services and lower costs through collaborative strategies including shared technology resources and leveraged purchasing agreements.

The HCISD ensures the financial resources of the agency by thoroughly analyzing, determining, and allocating funding where needed. The budget approval process flows through many individuals and is evaluated for consistent alignment with the HCISD vision to provide innovative, quality educational services and programs. The appropriate allocation of financial resources is demonstrated by the HCISD commitment to not only the agency but also constituent districts and Hillsdale County. The HCISD is also financially supportive of SIP and professional development activities at all levels of the HCISD.

The HCISD success in achieving financial efficiency has enabled districts more direct resources for classroom instruction. The agency leads innovative initiatives, like the state recognized Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI), where collaborating educational support with local school districts and consolidating support services with traditional efforts like, cooperative agreements, inter-agency and business partnerships.

The HCISD sponsored ELI spearheaded the following RFP's over the past two years:

- Countywide finance and student software package Skyward
- 403 (b) 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Administrator
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Substitute System
- Custodial Purchasing Co-op
- Bus Tire RFP
- Cooperative Paper Purchasing

And have also coordinated the following programs directly benefiting all students:

- Pupil accounting and auditing coordination
- Printing and delivery services
- Youth Home and Renaissance School
- Fiber Consortium (Fiduciary)
- Pre-Teacher Academy Class
- New Teacher Academy
- Saturday School Fiduciary
- Distance Learning Coordination
- Technology Assistance

In addition to the ELI initiative the HCISD continues to offer a continuum of collaborative programs and services for all students from special education programs including center- and local-based special education programs, including ancillary and contracted staff to support programs, teacher consultant support and providing quality service while maximizing economies of scale.

- Cooperative milk and bread bids
- Pupil accounting and auditing coordination and services
- Public relations advice and counsel to local school districts, as requested
- Crisis planning and crisis communication
- Early On Imagination Library
- Grant writing Consultation
- Regional Literacy Training Satellite Center
- School Improvement Consultation
- Hillsdale-Lenawee-Monroe Math & Science Center
- No Child Left Behind consultation
- Cooperative Paper Purchasing Program
- Instructional technologies
- Cooperative purchase of Educational Development Plan software
- Center- and local-based special education programs, including ancillary and contracted staff to support programs
- Professional Development coordination and services
- State Board Continuing Education Units (SB-CEU) countywide approval and administration
- University credit agreements
- County Wide Internet Access and technology support

Quality staff and strategic planning processes are in place to ensure all budgetary account requirements are achieved. Additionally sound financial strategies provide secondary checks and balances for accountability ensuring reliable and accurate bookkeeping. Strong internal controls are achieved by adherence to board guidelines and administrative rules. Board policies and guidelines require various approvals on purchases/expenditures.

Budgetary accounts are created and appropriated annually. Account practices are to ensure adequate funding resources for programs current or in development. All initiatives, program and systemic, are considered during all budget appropriation and modification.

The HCISD utilizes a zero-based budget approach in the creation and management of the district budget to facilitate prioritizing of expenditures. Departments work with staff to develop aligned needs. Long-range projections are developed and used to communicate with the HCISD Board, directors, and local districts, providing an understanding of budget impacts in the future. These projections are shared with all local superintendents by the director of budget and finance who attends the monthly superintendent's meetings on a regular basis.

In an attempt to ensure that funds are allocated appropriately, the superintendent, executive director and other directors meet regularly to review building needs, projections and actual expenditures. Input and budget requests from supervisors are also considered and adjustments as needed are included in the final budget.

Complete monitoring and audits are conducted annually by a third-party accounting firm and all fiduciary practices are conducted in accordance with these auditory results. The HCISD has received

continuous unqualified (clean) reports from auditors. There has never been a qualified opinion issued to the HCISD.

Funding in areas appropriate for the professional development of staff are allocated based on needs identified by administration and SIP teams from “need reviews” and governmental guidelines. Staff must align professional development activities with the school improvement protocols and in relation to identified individual, team, and department needs. This is approved and monitored by the SIP coordinator or appropriate director. The HCISD supports the SIP process by allocating federal REAP funds specifically for HCISD SIP.

### **How does the agency promote and support services that meet the needs of all learners?**

The HCISD promotes aligned and varied support services to meet the needs of all learners whether with instructional technologies or staff professional development. Backed by a strategic technology plan and scalable technological infrastructure the HCISD can develop strategies to assist all 21<sup>st</sup> Century learners.

Agency staff development, at this time, is provided on a program-by-program basis and based on the particular needs or through individual requests by professional and support staff members. Some assignments are very specific in focus; staff may seek professional development outside of the district by attending conferences or visiting other programs. Forms are provided on a yearly basis for the professional and support staff employees to record professional development achievements. Periodic surveys and individual evaluations provide feedback on the validity and success of the staff development process. These are then archived in both the employee’s personnel records, as well as, reported to the state REP reporting system. Each year we ignite the school year with an aligned, all-staff professional development activity.

However, more strategic planning and implementation of a larger, systemic process is needed to nurture future progress of the development of the professional learning environment as it relates to SIP. Still within the agency there is a disconnect between aligned staff development and agency resources. Systemic processes to identify professional needs and capacities to meet those needs must be formulated to begin providing the appropriate opportunities for increased knowledge and accreditations of our professional and support staff.

The General Education department works extensively with the local districts to provide aligned and collaborative professional development. Professional development needs are brought forward at the local administrative level meetings which an HCISD representative attends. Planning and resources are led by the HCISD. The HCISD is widely recognized across the region for its hosting and facilitation of a three-day summer literacy institute that has averaged over 170 participants for the past seven years. Also, the planning and coordination of a countywide professional development day in early September has been entrusted to the HCISD for several years.

The HCISD is somewhat limited in its content-specific consultancy abilities, and will call on local district expertise to assist with content-specific offerings, but have led the way in the development of the ‘standards’ movement and offered quality professional development in curriculum and lesson design, differentiated instruction (RTI) and assessment. Our local districts being relatively small, HCISD-led professional development gives teachers the opportunity to work with teacher colleagues, which many local teachers appreciate. The HCISD offers SB-CEUs for most professional development offerings and works with Spring Arbor University to offer university credit when applicable.

The HCISD performs extensive planning for the use and maintenance of technology within its facilities to insure staff and students are utilizing appropriate tools in the instructional setting. The HCISD Technology Department, consisting of five staff members, provides services over a wide range of operations in order to provide a full menu of technology to the constituent districts. Strategic planning and weekly departmental meetings provide direction to coordinate and maintain all computer equipment and software to meet the needs and requirements of every program. On a rotating basis, computers are retired after three years of service life and replaced with new technology. The technology rotation plan helps to provide a current level of technology, as well as, reduce increased costs associated with the maintenance of old technology. Technology staff meets periodically with all departments to develop a technology needs assessment.

Software is updated when required by a program or as new upgraded materials become available. Production software is upgraded as computer systems allow or in conjunction with upgrade of computer systems. Network resources are upgraded as needed and are maintained with state-of-the-art equipment and software, including multi-processor capacity, server virtualization and Storage Area Network arrays. All data is archived on a daily basis and disaster recovery plans are currently being implemented to ensure full data recovery in case of natural disaster or any other activity destroying current operational data.

The HCISD has undertaken agreements with constituent districts to provide a suite of applications and supporting services. This application suite addresses the districts' needs in the areas of student management, finance, payroll and human resources (Skyward). In support of this application suite, the agency provides appropriate hardware and technical expertise to maintain the applications' operational status. Hardware includes servers, backup devices and appropriate firewalls and filtering. Technical expertise encompasses all functions necessary to maintain the proper operation of the systems and safeguard the data. The HCISD also provides consultant support on how to best utilize the application suite within the operational parameters of the district. The finance and HR applications directly support the district's front-office permitting the district to concentrate on areas of instruction rather than supporting these systems. Additionally, Skyward interfaces many functions that permit more direct support of students, such as: Student Connect to allow students to access their grades and information, Parent Connect to allow parents to follow a student's progress, Teacher Connect to allow teacher's to enter student attendance and grades from a web environment, and Food Service which tracks student participation in the school lunch program. The HCISD provides various technology solutions to all constituent school districts. Formal agreements exist between the HCISD and two districts, Hillsdale and Jonesville, to provide all IT support. The HCISD assigns technical support personnel to these districts resulting in the districts no longer employing their own support personnel. The HCISD also provides various technology solutions in the form of network security (firewalls), email SPAM blocking, web content filtering, web hosting and the sharing of knowledge through technology committee meetings with other districts.

A county-wide fiber optic network is maintained by the HCISD for utilization by members of the Fiber Optic Consortium. HCISD designs, administers and is working with MERIT to expand the fiber optic network throughout neighboring Jackson and Lenawee counties. Members of the Fiber Optic Consortium include the HCISD and seven of the eight county school districts. The fiber network provides high-speed computer access within the county, as well as, access to networks outside the county via the Internet. This high-speed network greatly enhances our abilities to offer distance learning classes throughout the county and soon between counties throughout the region.

Moodle, a technology resource, is used in conjunction with our Pre-Teacher Academy, a collaborative program sponsored by the HCISD and offered to local districts. This highly recognized program provides online instruction and assessment of students.

United Streaming, through Discovery Education, provide 22,500 educational video titles in a digital format that can be downloaded to a local computer. The HCISD hosts the system, and teachers at the constituent districts may download videos for classroom or professional development use directly across the fiber optic network.

Yet another resource available to local districts via our technology system is online class experiences which are mandated by the Michigan Department of Education, as part of the newly formed Michigan Merit Curriculum, requiring graduating seniors to have completed a certain number of hours of meaningful online experiences. The HCISD has assisted in the development of recommendations for meaningful, online courses and our technology supports both virtual and live, interactive opportunities. The HCISD offers AP US History, three French classes, including a junior high French class and HS Journalism with a partner classroom located in the Lee County School District in Florida. Every attempt is made to provide adequate distance learning accessibility including all technical support, professional development, and monitoring (help system) for all instructors and students to maintain connectivity for training sessions via fiber-optic network for an unlimited amount of programs and connections.

Internet access is provided with sufficient bandwidth to every instructor and student to successfully complete any reasonable student learning activity set forth within the HCISD mission. Additionally, content filtering and network security is in place with state-of-the-art technology to ensure a safe, yet accessible Internet environment for every student.

The HCISD operates a centralized Help Desk for both internal and external customers. An email submission system is available on the HCISD website, as well as, a phone assistance option which is utilized by many stakeholders.

These aforementioned support resources are not manageable without a strong commitment by the HCISD to develop and maintain its own physical infrastructure including five building sites, maintenance equipment, facilities, and services to provide a safe, orderly and healthy environment.

The facilities managed by the agency handle safety concerns unique to their individual site through the implementation of a local safety committee. These safety committees meet on a regular basis to monitor and advise each building's administration and staff on safety concerns. Each facility also has its own crisis management plan developed to accommodate the unique needs of the building. Crisis management training and appropriate documentation is provided to the professional and support staff in compliance with the federal Homeland Security Act. Documentation is updated on an annual basis to ensure accurate data is available at all times. Appropriate measures have been taken to ensure appropriate emergency procedures and details are available to all staff members at any time for emergency situations. Some training and conferences have been held in the past to update policies and to design future, more effective procedures. More regular meetings are necessary to remain in compliance.

Security measures have been taken in areas of student activities to ensure the safety and well-being of every student. Security systems are in place to facilitate appropriate access for staff and a secured environment for all classroom activities and equipment.



All electronic data is held on a secured network and archived daily. A disaster recovery plan is currently being implemented to ensure full data recovery in case of natural disaster or any other activity destroying current operational data.

Sites are maintained through annual contracts with independent lawn maintenance and snow removal services. The five facilities are provided custodial services by three full-time and one part-time custodians managed by one part-time lead custodian, whose duties also include maintenance and operations, and a part-time maintenance supervisor responsible for the operations of the entire district sites and custodial staff. Services such as trash removal and pest control are contracted in three year increments. Equipment is managed by the lead custodian and contracted custodial supplier. All custodial and maintenance equipment is serviced monthly or sooner if necessary as requested by the custodians and or lead custodian. Equipment is evaluated on an annual basis during the summer months by contracted custodial maintenance suppliers. The HCISD has implemented a program utilizing “Green Cleaning Chemical” systems for maintaining and cleaning all of the district’s facilities. These chemicals are free of perfumes, dyes or other harmful substances which may affect our students and negatively impact the environment. The HCISD has never received a negative report or citation for any of the facilities or sites maintained for and used by students, professional or support staff.

Through strategic planning and the consultancy of a contracted engineering firm, the district is looking to gain a better understanding on how to best utilize the facilities and grounds. Over the past 10 years, the HCISD has not employed any maintenance personnel. All maintenance has been contracted to the lowest bidder via the district purchaser. Currently, the district has identified the need for a part-time position responsible for maintenance and operations. This position would maintain a log of maintenance requests, completion points and formulate a contact process in order to expedite the maintenance approval process and completion of maintenance related items.

**What is the agency’s process to ensure it maintains compliance with state and federal laws, policies, and regulations?**

The HCISD, like every public entity, is held to high standards and ethics and are guided by several, federal and state laws and mandates. A professional approach is taken to ensure all laws and regulations are followed. Careful consideration is given to staffing and student issues regarding the agency’s responsibilities to uphold legislative requirements. The HCISD administrative meetings are held regularly (monthly) as well as departmental and staff meetings to update, discuss, interpret, monitor, implement mandates to guarantee requirements are met and that agency personnel has awareness of how mandates link to the actual scope and HCISD mission of ensuring student success. A continued effort to promote open communication and provide appropriate resources to fulfill the vision and to create a cohesive understanding of the actual scope of the mission is needed.

The professional and support staff belong to the Michigan Education Association (MEA) and is supported by a local building representative and a MEA representative. Employee rights issues are handled here. In a proactive approach, the Superintendent and union representatives meet monthly to head off potential situations.

Many federal laws and regulations impact all areas of the agency specifically in the area of human rights/student rights. The HCISD Board has aligned all local policies to federal and state requirements. The HCISD retains the services of a consulting law firm if issues arise. The HCISD Superintendent and Directors attend state level meetings and are very in tune with laws and mandates. The HCISD receives numerous inquiries from constituents for interpretation of specific

laws including rights of homeless students, expulsion, special education testing protocols, etc. Each department is responsible for the knowledge of the inquiry and is recognized and if necessary does research then provides accurate information and/or resources. Listed below are the federal and state laws and regulations that guide our agency.

- United States Constitution
- Bill of Rights
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
- No Child Left Behind (NCLB)
- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Gun/Drug Free School Act
- Title IX - Equity in Program
- Services Act
- McKinney Vento Homeless Act
- Hatch Amendment
- Equal Access Act
- Federal and State Unemployment Law
- Taxation Laws (Regulation, Collection, Certification, Deferral, etc.)
- Michigan Special Education Rules and Regulations
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act
- Jobs for Veterans Act (P.L. 107-288)
- Trade Adjustment Assistance Reform Act (TAA Reform Act)
- Michigan Constitution
- Revised School Code (MCL 380.1 – 380.1851)
- The State Aid Act (MCL 388.1 – 388.1780)
- Michigan Penal Code
- Child Protection Law
- Michigan Election Law
- Corporal Punishment Act
- Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)
- Open Meetings Act (OMA)
- Tenure Act
- Public Employees Relations Act (PERA)
- Pupil Transportation Act
- Bullard-Plawecki Employee Right to Know Act
- Individuals with Disabilities Act
- Michigan Civil Rights Law
- PA 198 Rehabilitation Act of 1973
- Food Stamp Act of 1977 (P.L. 105-33)
- Workforce Investment Act of 1998

## Stakeholder Communications & Relationships

Content Area Champions: Judy Kochendorfer, Director of Career Technical Ed. (25 yrs)  
Kim Svacha, Administrative Assistant (7 yrs)

**STANDARD:** The agency fosters effective communications and relationships with and among its constituents and other stakeholders.

**Impact Statement:** An agency is successful in meeting this standard when it has the understanding, commitment, and support of its constituents and other stakeholders. Agency personnel seek opportunities for collaboration and shared leadership among its constituents and other stakeholders to help students learn and advance improvement efforts.

INDICATORS		Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the agency:</b>					
6.1	Fosters collaboration with its constituents and other stakeholders to support learning				<b>x</b>
6.2	Uses agency-wide strategies to listen to and communicate with its constituents and other stakeholders			<b>x</b>	
6.3	Solicits the knowledge and skills of its constituents and other stakeholders to enhance the work of the agency			<b>x</b>	
6.4	Communicates the goals and expectations for service in support of learning to all constituents and other stakeholders			<b>x</b>	
6.5	Provides information that is meaningful and useful to its constituents and other stakeholders				<b>x</b>

### Definitions

Not Evident

Little or no evidence exists

Emerging

Evidence indicates early or preliminary stages of implementation of practice

**Operational**

**Evidence indicates practices and procedures are actively implemented**

Highly Functional

Evidence indicates practices and procedures are fully integrated and effectively and consistently implemented

### Overall Self Assessment Status for Stakeholder Communications & Relationships:

Not Evident

Emerging

**Operational**

Highly Functional

### Focus Questions

## **How does the agency's leadership ensure that the agency is responsive to community expectations and constituents and other stakeholder satisfaction?**

The Hillsdale County Intermediate School District (HCISD) values the role that all of its stakeholders play in the success of the district and its students. The agency recognizes it does not exist alone and this is reflected in its mission to the community.

The HCISD demonstrates intentional efforts to listen, to gain understanding of, and plan for all of our constituencies/stakeholders collaboratively. It is the goal of HCISD, through shared leadership, to demonstrate a high level of meaningful participation aimed at improving learning for students and educators. The HCISD demonstrates that processes are in place to provide quality services, solicit feedback, and jointly plan for implementation that yields customer or stakeholder satisfaction. Without these efforts, HCISD would see: few opportunities for collaboration and shared leadership; little or no participation by stakeholder groups; and a lack of continuous improvement design in our agency and local districts to increase achievement of students and adults.

HCISD Service Plans are an example of the processes in place that ensure the agency is responsive to the stakeholders' expectations. One example of listening to and being responsive to stakeholders is the Special Education Plan. The goal for each Individualized Education Plan (IEP) is to meet the unique needs of one of our largest stakeholder groups, students with disabilities. The HCISD leadership ensures the quality implementation of all IEPs and guarantees all special education rules and regulations are followed to be responsive to the educational goals for students with IEPs. The Special Education Department also holds monthly meetings made up of administrators, parents and community members. Known locally as the Parent Advisory Council (PAC), PAC provides a venue for parents to voice their concerns and offer input on various related issues.

In Career and Technical Education, TRAC is a monitoring system used to determine if educational programs, instructional strategies, supplementary aides, services and transition services have been consistently implemented and compliant with State of Michigan guidelines. Based on TRAC results, improvement strategies are implemented. TRAC is a tool for internal staff to not only learn the steps to better serve students, but also a way to monitor progress towards the responsiveness of the expectations for the Career and Technical Education CTE programs. Additionally, the Hillsdale Workforce Development and Technology Center Business Advisory Committee allows business advisors to provide input into the program structure, delivery, and resources for the Hillsdale Workforce Development and Technology Center. This input is valuable in designing and updating programs to meet industry standards and needs. This committee structure also provides an avenue for this stakeholder group to voice program satisfaction and/or raise concerns. CTE has program-specific advisory committees with the majority of the members from business and industry. The Program Advisory Committee performs a wide variety of functions. These functions may include providing input to curriculum and instruction, program review, recruitment and job placement, student organizations, staff development, community/public relations, resources, and legislation. In addition, new applications for CTE programs are developed with assistance and guidance from the Program Advisory Committee. The chairperson signs and dates the application to indicate the committee's concurrence.

The General Education Department facilitates many stakeholder activities to ensure stakeholder satisfaction. The HCISD Education Leadership Team meets monthly. This group is comprised of support staff, professional staff and administrators. This group shares ongoing updates about their specialty area of the ISD. Local district superintendents and HCISD directors meet monthly to discuss organizational goals and issues; during these discussions, members have an opportunity to

provide leadership and measure our collective work as it meets the needs of our customers and stakeholders. The same model guides high school and elementary principals and HCISD supervisors. These groups meet monthly to discuss building level issues; during these discussions, many professional development opportunities and student needs emerge. Another group that meets monthly is the Hillsdale County Counselor's Association. Members of this group include: high school, middle school and elementary counselors; community members from the Hillsdale County Community Foundation staff; and School Success staff and private counselors from the county. This group determines common scheduling and special projects and events such as College Night for student and parent stakeholders.

Another key stakeholder and partner is Jackson Community College (JCC). The HCISD has a history of promoting community dialogue and collaboration with Jackson Community College. Current partnerships include providing interactive television (ITV) college classes for Hillsdale County Students and also Articulation Agreements for CTE Programs. Other noteworthy collaborations are with the Hillsdale Probate Court where the HCISD provides a liaison to a county youth drug court program and directs the youth home education classes ensuring those students an opportunity to keep academic pace while incarcerated. Another collaborative developed by the HCISD is the Infant/Toddler Early On Program; the HCISD partners with local service agencies to provide planning and resources to young families. A highly successful example of this collaboration includes Imagination Library, a national Dolly Parton sponsored early literacy program, providing monthly materials to over 1000 children in the county.

All programs and activities are monitored to ensure customer satisfaction. Customer satisfaction surveys are used to measure intentional stakeholder input opportunities that HCISD staff use to rate the effectiveness of programs and services. The results of such surveys impact the individual departments and organizational school improvement goals, strategies and services provided. Also staff development is provided to and by all departments throughout the HCISD. Specific staff development topics are determined by strategic need by the leaders in each department and coordinated with local and state initiatives; and also based upon student data and the needs of our local schools. Staff development is provided at the lowest costs possible to the local schools, though food, supplies and cost of speakers is sometimes required. Most staff development is coordinated using local resources (expertise). State Board Continuing Education Units (SB CEUs) and university credit are offered where appropriate. Staff development is based upon the continuous improvement model and always adheres to the best practices and research available at the time. Evaluations from these workshops influence the direction and development of future offerings.

Service Contract Agreements are made with many area companies and agencies to support the work being done for the stakeholders by HCISD. An example of how cooperative purchasing works is when the HCISD administers RFP's to purchase school supplies in large quantities for many of the districts through a competitive process. This competitive process which is determined by a committee of people, then examines RFP's and awards them to the best providers. The process used ensures the community's expectations and stakeholder's needs are being met with high-quality services with lower costs.

Federal, state and local grants are sought by different departments within the HCISD. For example each HCISD department has applied for such grants as Federal Grants like Perkins and Tech Prep, MDE Early Childhood grants such as Great Parents, Great Start and others. The Special Education Department also seeks grants to assist in the delivery of needed services to their constituents, for example the Transition Grant. Grants are an important venue to stay abreast of innovative strategies

as well as to assist in the financing of such initiatives. All grants are collaborative and contain an evaluative component that ensures the HCISD is responsive to its stakeholders.

**What avenues are used to communicate information about effectiveness of agency programs and services to stakeholders?**

Communicating expectations of stakeholder information is achieved using a variety of methods within the Hillsdale County Intermediate School District (HCISD). From the individual constituent classroom teacher to the agency's administration team and all levels in between. The HCISD provides timely resources and information to stakeholders about the effectiveness of the agency and its programs. At the crux of communication is the HCISD commitment to technology advancements.

The HCISD Technology Department has been providing technology services to eight local school districts since 2001. The goal of the technology department is to provide prompt, practical, innovative and sustainable solutions to provide avenues for communicating with stakeholders. Formal channels for gathering and communicating information to and from stakeholders are in place and operating effectively and efficiently. The email and phone system provide teachers, administrators, staff, and school board members with ways to effectively communicate with parents, stakeholders and community members.

The HCISD website provides a user friendly way for internal and external stakeholders to access the agency's vision, mission, resources and services. HCISD technology staff updates, provides, and monitors information including layout and content

Another avenue used to communicate information is video conferencing and ITV Classes. Video Conferencing is a communications technology that integrates video and voice to connect remote users. Each user has the ability to see and hear each other, allowing natural conversations not possible with voice-only communications technology. The HCISD uses PolyCom equipment to make this connection possible. Seven of the eight local districts use ITV formats. ITV and video conferencing is governed by a board known as the Fiber Consortium. This collaborative team monitors and reviews program costs, effectiveness, and equipment updates. The HCISD also has a history of promoting community dialogue and collaboration with business and Jackson Community College. Current partnerships include providing ITV classes for Hillsdale County students and also Articulation Agreements for CTE programs.

The Hillsdale County Superintendent's Association provides a unique communication link. This leadership group meets monthly to review state policy updates and work on countywide collaborative initiatives. The superintendent from each local school attends these meetings and each HCISD Director gives a monthly report. The focus of these meetings is efficient use of resources and the best ways to increase student success.

The HCISD strives to have a positive working relationship with the local media. Both local radio and newspaper are very educationally orientated and report school news from board meetings to student of the month programs. This relationship helps the community and stakeholders to better understand critical educational issues and celebratory successes involving the HCISD and constituent districts.

**Commitment to Continuous Improvement**

**Standard Champion: Pat Dillon, General Education Supervisor (8yrs)**

**STANDARD:** The agency establishes, implements, and monitors a continuous process of improvement that positively impacts the services and programs in support of learning.

**Impact Statement:** An agency is successful in meeting this standard when it implements a collaborative and ongoing process for improvement. New improvement efforts are informed by the results of earlier efforts through reflection and assessment of the improvement process.

INDICATORS		Not Evident	Emerging	Operational	Highly Functional
<b>In fulfillment of this standard, the agency:</b>					
7.1	Engages in an agency-wide continuous process of improvement that articulates the vision and purpose the agency is pursuing (Vision); maintains a rich and current description of the agency, its community, and constituent and agency effectiveness (Profile); employs goals, strategies, and interventions to positively impact the services that support learning (Plan); and documents and uses the results to inform what happens next (Results)			<b>x</b>	
7.2	Engages its constituents and other stakeholders in its agency-wide continuous process of improvement				<b>x</b>
7.3	Ensures that each program area (including agency operated-schools, if applicable) has a plan for continuous improvement that is aligned with the agency's vision and purpose				<b>x</b>
7.4	Provides professional development and technical assistance for agency and constituent staff to help them implement improvement strategies/interventions that positively impact learning			<b>x</b>	
7.5	Monitors and communicates the results of improvement efforts to its constituents and other stakeholders			<b>x</b>	
7.6	Evaluates and documents the effectiveness and impact of its agency-wide continuous process of improvement			<b>x</b>	
7.7	Allocates and protects time for planning and engaging in continuous improvement efforts agency-wide				<b>x</b>
7.8	Provides direction and assistance to program areas (including agency-operated schools, if applicable) and its constituents and other stakeholders to support continuous improvement efforts and meet constituents' identified needs				<b>x</b>

**Overall Self Assessment Status for Commitment to Continuous Improvement:**

Not Evident       Emerging       **Operational**       Highly Functional

**Describe the process for continuous improvement used by the agency and the impact of this process on learning and organizational effectiveness.**

The HCISD is proud of the agency's recognition, commitment, developing, and sometimes reinventing SIP process. The HCISD has been very committed to school improvement for over two decades beginning with the creation of the Hillsdale Service Network (HSN) that provided a countywide collaborative approach to both direct and indirect student and family services. In the late 1990s the HCISD led a statewide initiative for Baldrige Training. Many of our constituent districts as well as the HCISD were recognized by the Michigan Quality Council (MQC) at different levels. The Baldrige Training allowed a foundation, and created a mature SIP culture and an agency process of which all employees are a part of, and have come to recognize the role SIP plays in ensuring student success. All SIP teams, professional and support, meet regularly at least four times a year to strategically plan, implement, and monitor their content areas strategies ensuring student success. We are fortunate to have Rural Education Assistance Program (REAP) funding and the support of the HCISD Board and Administration to incorporate a defined SIP process. In place is a district wide leadership team as well as building leadership teams and content specific teams. The process works like many other models for improvement. Defined SIP teams meet annually to first review data; then determine "program or agency needs" based upon data interpretation. The need is then articulated into measureable goals. Reasonable and relevant goals are then strategized and action plans created. Our greatest accomplishments thus far is a self-monitoring piece, an agency that can "talk-the-talk" regarding their role in the School Improvement Process and the impact on student success. A resounding commitment from leadership is evident to provide the resources whether it is in leadership training, participation in an active statewide School Improvement Facilitator Network (SIFN) or as evidenced by the work with AdvancEd.

**What process is used to ensure that the improvement goals reflect learning needs and are aligned with the vision and purpose of the agency?**

The process which works best is the many diverse, yet aligned ongoing SIP activities. We begin the year at our Back-to-School session with a specific portion of the agenda dedicated to SIP. The SIP coordinator updates the entire staff on SIP information and business.

Our recent history has also allowed us, based on need, to determine an agency wide SIP focus for the year based on the Standards of the Michigan School Improvement Framework. As a starting point four years ago, the HCISD leadership team determined an agency goal would be in the area of "teaching and learning." Alignment of curriculum was a major activity in year one. The following year, based on what the first year told us, we discovered we needed to be "data-friendly" so our agency focus in year two was "results and data-driven decision making." In order to make good decisions around curriculum alignment and assessment, we needed to know what information (data) was available and how relevant. Each team identified two pieces of data used specifically in their area. In the third year, our focus again was the "teaching and learning" standard to complete our work from the first year.

Year three allowed us to not only determine what to teach, when to teach, why to teach, but alignment of assessments and more in-depth teacher dialogue about how to teach particular academic standards. In the 2008/09 school year our agency focus has been again on a Michigan School Improvement Framework Standard of "school and community relations." We have targeted and aligned professional development including a Back-to-School speaker who spoke on "building relationships" and a "custom service" expert to speak this March. Additionally, each team then focuses on the agency goal in their specific area.



Each team works together to establish needs, goals, strategies and implementing action plans. The process is monitored by the SIP coordinator who works with all teams, building principals, and HCISD administration. Upon determining a need, the SIP team will identify goals and strategies, action plans and resources needed. The resources could be in the form of classroom materials or professional development. Each team receives a SIP stipend toward approved SIP strategies. Teams or individuals can apply for the resources at any time during the year, but all requests must be aligned to the overall agency mission, SIP need or team need. In early May, usually the last SIP meeting, teams are asked to review their progress and begin looking at the next year's needs. This information is used by the SIP monitor to determine the upcoming year's agency need. At the end of the calendar year, we reconvene as an entire agency and recognize and celebrate the SIP efforts for the year.

Our SIP efforts are not just inter agency; we obviously work very close with our constituent districts to help them with their local SIP efforts. The process is basically the same as stated above. Most notable, however, is how the needs are developed. We have very active HCISD-led monthly countywide associations: superintendents; elementary principals; MS/HS principals; and school counselors, all of which bring data to the table. From various input and discussion, a need is identified and the inter agency model described above is put into place and collaborative countywide activities, specifically in the area of staff development, are planned and implemented. Most notable of this model of collaboration is in 2008-09 a year long elementary writing initiative involving 80 plus teachers.

**What process is used to ensure that agency staff is provided professional development and technical assistance to implement strategies/interventions and achieve agency improvement goals?**

The HCISD is guided by its mission of being collaborative partners and educational innovators as it pertains to staff development for both its agency SIP teams and constituent districts. The agency determines professional development activities based on its determination of individual, team, departmental, and agency needs established by study and interpretation of several data sources. Demographic and perceptual data have helped determine both local constituent and agency needs. Academic data drives classroom decision making and curriculum alignment including multiple formative and summative assessments. This information is then used to align individual, classroom, program, ancillary services and support personnel staff development needs. Each agency department and team may identify staff or professional development opportunities from a variety of research-based methods from classroom visitations, workshops, conferences, local book studies, consultant services, regional and statewide committee work and SIP team meetings. Regardless, the same process is in place to ensure aligned professional development - SIP teams determine needs, generate goals, align strategies to achieve those goals, design action plans, including implementation and monitoring. Some agency personnel serve as resources within the organization to deliver technical assistance around specific initiatives. For example, the HCISD technology department offers both staff and professional development opportunities to our agency members and local districts on an individual or group basis. Microsoft 2007, Skyward Student and Business Information System, United Streaming, virtual field trips, ITV classes, and Promethean Board training are recent technology and general education departmental designed activities. The SIP process has yielded a countywide para-professional and support services conference designed by the HCISD para-professional team and facilitated by the HCISD general education department. Also a countywide special education and general education initiative around the Response to Intervention (RTI) model is a collaborative, ongoing professional development activity sponsored by the HCISD. The process has also assisted the CTE department who has invested professional development

resources to cross walk national and state curriculum with employability skills and specific program clusters.

The HCISD is recognized by its constituent districts as professional development leaders employing the same process of need identification, goal setting, aligned strategies, appropriate resources for implementation, and a system for monitoring and gathering feedback. On the county level, all HCISD sponsored professional development activities are evaluated by the participants. The feedback (survey data) is used at the fore mentioned superintendent, principal, and counselor level to identify common local needs. Locally each year the HCISD sponsors an all county professional development day in September. All 450 classroom teachers convene around a data determined topic. Recent keynote and workshop speakers included: Ruby Payne, an associate who addressed rural poverty; and Todd Whitaker, a noted national speaker and author of What Great Teachers Do Differently. Additionally, the HCISD offers workshops around specific content area needs. Our partnership with the Hillsdale, Lenawee, Monroe County ISD Math Science Center, brings quality aligned professional development and resources to our county. The HCISD has also created several network distribution lists that electronically send professional development opportunities to our local constituents. All professional development activities are electronically monitored by Solutionware, a registration and data system that tracks participation trends and other useful information.

Regionally the HCISD collaborates with six neighboring ISDs to host a summer literacy conference that attracts an average of 170 elementary teachers from across Southeastern Michigan. The conference extends for three days at Hillsdale College to offer a major literacy initiative in our region. Additionally, many on the HCISD administrative team participate in regional and state level committees as leaders who create quality and aligned professional development.

**How does the leadership ensure that the agency’s improvement plan is implemented, assessed, monitored, achieved, and communicated to its constituents and other stakeholders?**

The commitment of the HCISD Board of Education, superintendent, and directors toward school improvement has provided many benefits. An established process with several monitoring protocols has helped anchor the system and create not only accountability but credibility in the process as well. Documentation of attendance and agendas are required from all meetings. Resource requests are written, aligned and approved by a supervisor or SIP coordinator. Each team is responsible for submitting an end of the year report highlighting their SIP activities. Additionally the development of common SIP language has emerged as a benefit. This common language is a result of a developing culture that understands and values the SIP process. The process has allowed individuals, teams, departments and the agency an opportunity to impact change leading to increased student success. Those in the agency who have embraced SIP have demonstrated professional growth, program change and positive leadership.

Being an agency where our services are not only specialized but diverse, a challenge comes in the form of communicating SIP agency philosophies, updates, changes, and protocols. The administrative team recognizes the need to improve consistent communication strategies and has developed, as one of its SIP goals, a communication plan that has looked at multiple ways through technology and other conventional strategies to create more timely and efficient communication. The same communication plan addresses sharing information with our collaborative community partners.

## **Description of the Education Service Agency’s Methods for Quality Assurance**

### **What processes does the agency use to monitor and document improvement?**

The HCISD has in place quality assurance processes to measure SIP effectiveness across all departments within our agency and their efforts to improve student success. The superintendent and the Executive Leadership Team of the ELI is made up of 13 community members. The Team meets monthly to look at multiple data from multiple perspectives. The superintendent and administrative team meet monthly to discuss, assess and make decisions regarding agency planning. The superintendent and executive director meet with supervisors, department heads, and principals for discussion and recognition of agency and constituent needs. The countywide superintendent association and the two constituent principal organizations hold monthly meetings with HCISD representation that allow for feedback, input, and direction on the operations at the LEA level and how our agency staff can support them.

### **How does the agency provide meaningful feedback and support to its constituents and stakeholders?**

The agency conducts SIP reviews yearly to review progress and to adjust and align strategies to “needs.” An agency Leadership Team representing all areas of the agency meets monthly and functions as a flow through of agency information and insights. Each building has their own leadership teams as well to ensure the appropriate stakeholders are involved in the school improvement process and understand the rationale for SIP related decisions. The HCISD General Education department works collaboratively with agency departments and LEAS to provide aligned professional development for professional and support staff.

### **How does the agency ensure that the AdvancEd standards are met by the schools operated by the agency and the agency as a whole?**

The Greenfield School and the Hillsdale Workforce Development and Technology Center, as well as all of our programs, are guided by the same SIP process. Both building administrators sit on the HCISD administrative team. All HCISD programs, departments and individual employees identify “needs” through data study, set goals and implement strategies using the SIP process as the foundation. Each building reports monthly activities to the Board of Education and at appropriate meetings.

### **How does the agency regularly collect, use, and communicate results?**

The HCISD understands that the fundamentals of the SIP process link together and when done right provide a model for continuous improvement, opportunities to impact student success and professional growth, and ownership. The HCISD culture has matured to understand the importance of using data in a relevant, timely and transparent manner as the key fundamental in the SIP process. The nature of the agency is to use a variety of data sources to make decisions that align to student success. At this time communication of results is sporadic but strategies such as the devised communication plan will likely improve this area. The present leadership of the HCISD is recognizes and is committed to SIP, and that resources like AdvancEd provide a researched

framework, quality products and services, and timely consultancy to assist the dedicated HCISD professionals help students achieve educational success.

## Peer-to-Peer Practice Submission

The Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI) was formally established in 2006. With the State of Michigan funding being slashed and students leaving Hillsdale County, schools' funding sources were significantly compromised. Programs, advanced courses, and foreign languages were being eliminated along with arts, music, and athletics. Demographic research revealed that Hillsdale County's students were bypassing the schools of Hillsdale County and attending districts outside of the County; students were leaving for broader curriculums, athletics, and larger school forums to allow for more options. Hillsdale County could not compete with its larger counterparts. In the 2005-06 school year, 309 Hillsdale County students went to other counties for their public education. The trend was discouraging, and action necessary to offer the curriculum choices students and parents were seeking right here in our county's public schools.

Collaboration of services was necessary to improve the economies of the schools and improve curriculum. Therefore, to wisely combine services making more funds available for curriculum, a study took place identifying the current state of expenditures for all public schools in Hillsdale County. The study of exactly how the districts were collectively deploying resources, so that our plans to improve were based upon a strong foundation of knowledge and not speculation, took place beginning in July 2006. To this end, Plante & Moran of Ann Arbor, Michigan were engaged to conduct a comprehensive study of public education, in fact, the most comprehensive study ever performed in the State of Michigan.

The study discovered how the schools of Hillsdale County plan curriculum, transport students, administer districts and buildings, feed students, communicate, train staff, perform payroll and bookkeeping services, purchase goods and services, and more. The study provided extensive data needed to make intelligent decisions about how public education could best serve the needs of our students and county.

Based on the results of the study in November of 2006, over 200 participants gathered at Hillsdale College to hear the results of a Hillsdale County Intermediate School District commissioned study on the future of Educational Needs in Hillsdale County presented by Plante and Moran. The study targeted the key business factors of financial sustainability; efficiency/effectiveness and customer satisfaction through collaboration of services. The study supported county wide educational strengths and identified challenges and opportunities.

As a result, the Executive Leadership Team was established with the charge of keeping momentum and holding the schools accountable for a better educational opportunity for the County's students. The Executive Leadership Team has membership of school board members, administrators, school personnel, students, college representation, MEA representation, community business leaders, and the probate court. Two main areas emerged for development: the business and educational sides of the Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI). A team was developed of people to review and make recommendations for concerns in regards to business expenditures and how to do business smarter: the Learning Support Planning Council. The Learning Support Planning Council monthly was charged with exploring all business office areas to determine if the county can work collaboratively to make more funding available for curriculum. This council reviews areas such as cooperative buying, RFPs, sharing of business officials between districts, cooperative software purchasing, cooperative buying of food service, and bus garage consumables, to name a few. A second team

was developed: the Learning Development Planning Council. This team is charged with reviewing what teacher-learning resources are already available throughout the county, to determine if resources are being used efficiently, to research rigorous curriculums, and to identify skills and traits valued by Hillsdale County employers. Both teams, the Learning Support Planning Council and the Learning Development Planning Council, report to the Executive Leadership Team. As needed, the two Councils, create sub-committees to research specific and extensive topics.

The Teams – the Executive Leadership Team, Learning Support Planning Council, Learning Development Planning Council – hold monthly meetings, with both councils reporting to the Executive Leadership Team. The Chairs of the Council are formally scheduled on the agenda of the Executive Leadership Team, the Chair then reports all developments, concerns, conversations, and other significant discussions/happenings. The Executive Leadership Team hears the reports and offers feedback to the Chair, often much conversation and discussion will take place around a specific topic. The Council Chair returns to their respective meetings and exchanges information.

The general public and stakeholders are kept aware of the ELI accomplishments and plans at appropriate timeframes via letter, one-on-one communication or media.

Many areas of education, curriculum and business, have been impacted by the ELI. Some of the accomplishments to date are:

- Countywide finance and student software package Skyward
- 403 (b) 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Administrator
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Party Substitute System
- Custodial Purchasing Co-op
- Bus Tire RFP
- Cooperative Paper Purchasing

And have also coordinated the following programs directly benefiting all students:

- Pupil accounting and auditing coordination
- Printing and delivery services
- Youth Home and Renaissance School
- Fiber Consortium (Fiduciary)
- Pre-Teacher Academy Class
- New Teacher Academy
- Saturday School Fiduciary
- Distance Learning Coordination
- Technology Assistance

The establishment of the ELI is receiving high acclaim throughout the State and, in fact, resulted in a new Public Act requiring all ISD/ESA's in Michigan to conduct similar processes. The superintendent has made multiple presentations regarding this innovative initiative locally, regionally and at the state and national levels. He was awarded a Winners' Circle Award by the Michigan Association of School Administrators in 2007, and has been a frequent guest speaker at numerous constituent meetings as a result of the initiative.

## Conclusion

**As you review your responses to the standards, what major trends, themes, or areas of focus emerge that cut across the seven standards?**

After a thorough review of the AdvancEd standards the HCISD recognizes several common threads. What may appear redundant actually speaks to the structured alignment within the agency. A long standing commitment and systematic approach to improvement; well defined improvement fundamentals and resources; and involvement of various stakeholders guide the agency's long standing vision. The Board of Education is fully supportive of improvement initiatives and an emerging understanding and commitment from internal stakeholders to using data to inform decision making is a developing strength. Agency recognition of a communication system that supports both internal and external collaboration and engagement with local districts and community stakeholders has created constituent partners and an increased awareness of customer service.

**Based on your review of these cross-cutting themes/trends and each of the seven standards, what would you consider to be your agency's greatest strengths?**

The HCISD strengths come from a rich history and long standing systematic approach to collaboration, improvement and managing change. The cornerstone is a vision and mission that has remained constant for many years. The vision has enabled the HCISD consistent organizational alignment, the ability to reinvent ourselves when needed demonstrating the flexibility of the agency, and responsiveness through consistent use of a variety of data sources to address student, staff, agency, and stakeholder needs in a timely fashion.

With courageous leadership and sound strategic planning, HCISD is recognized for maintaining positive relationships with stakeholders by promoting collaboration, listening, gaining input, aligning resources and expertise, implementing strategies, and providing monitoring support. These fundamentals are modeled right from the Board of Education throughout our agency in our work with our varied stakeholders.

These practices align to our mission creating learning environments conducive to increased student success. We are able to meet the diverse needs of learners by fostering a mature culture of improvement. The daily variables of challenges, high expectations, professionalism, expertise and change being a constant have led to an increased range of services, quality customer service and sincere stakeholder support.

All of the above agency strengths are possible because of our 130 dedicated employees. Their leadership, commitment, expertise, willingness to learn, and genuine concern for students and each other makes our agency thrive and makes us leaders in the greater Hillsdale Community.

### **What would you consider to be your agency's greatest challenges?**

HCISD recognizes challenges in our agency. Presently of which is the economy in the State of Michigan. The uncertainty of economic resources impacts how we fund and deliver programs and services. We are looked to by our constituents to provide innovation, programs and services that they sometimes are no longer able to provide. We are not immune to funding cuts, and shoring up our own agency has resulted in limited personnel and capacity concerns.

Hillsdale County is very conservative. Working with eight small economically strapped conservative communities, each with its own unique local perspective offers challenges in managing a balance of support and direction. We further recognize the challenges created by local politics and legislative mandates and respond to them as effectively as possible.

Curriculum and professional development alignment are moving forward and are being driven by the SIP process. The diversity and specialization of some job assignments call for the HCISD to provide more timely and proactive communication strategies, professional development activities, and access to and time to research best practices.

We must also continue to collect, analyze and direct instruction based on aligned and effective data resources. This consideration is already underway with the data mapping initiative. Finally recognition of successes and consistent expectations for all HCISD employees will help build a "one team" concept.

### **How will you use the insights gained from this self-assessment to inform and enhance your quality assurance and continuous improvement efforts?**

The self-assessment process has allowed the HCISD to look closely and honestly at our agency. It has provided an opportunity to learn and align the standards areas to current SIP practice. Most importantly, through the self-assessment, the agency has validated its SIP strengths, brought forth and discussed challenges, and fostered agency growth. Leadership will use the results of this self assessment process to enhance the agency vision, provide technical leadership skills in the SIP, and link to the countywide HCISD-led Educational Leadership Initiative. The self assessment will also allow the leadership to incorporate findings at the administrative level to serve as a catalyst for systemic planning. Professional and support staff will use the standards as guidance in their SIP efforts. The district will continue to stress the understanding of the efficient use of data to target areas of continuous improvement, professional growth, and community collaboration all of which ensures student success.