

Hillsdale County
Intermediate School District



NCA AdvancED 2009
Standard Review
Executive Summary



*The organization
that is committed
to creative
collaboration will
ride the wave.
Because there is
nothing more
empowering than
an idea whose time
has come!*



Standard 1

Vision & Purpose

Standard Champion: John Ciaravino



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. The sustainability of the “agency” is exemplified by the longevity of the mission which spans over twenty years and is the beacon for the HCISD.

With this cornerstone, the HCISD has worked through many collaborative initiatives including, the most recent Hillsdale County Educational Leadership Initiative (ELI). Within the agency, processes of imbedded activities and checks assuring both personnel and financial resources are focused on student success.

Concurrent with change is the stability of effort, to continually grow as an agency 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 is rooted in achieving student success.

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.

Within the HCISD agency, a strong commitment to developing an “improvement culture” with common SIP language and processes is a goal. The HCISD does not operate in isolation; due to our collaborative nature we work closely with our constituent districts to determine countywide needs, goals, and strategies.

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 through the collection of data also enhances planning.

Standard Rating: Operational



Standard 2

Leadership & Governance

Standard Champion: Robert Henthorne



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

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. All of these activities are centered on one basic tenet; to seek input regarding educational leadership issues and decision making leading to increased student success. An expression held dear to this organization is that "it's all in the relationship."

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. We incorporate this principle in everything we do understanding that shared leadership and decision making leads to a more productive and successful organization.

Administration sets a high priority of equity and support for innovation through engaging in a purposeful culture of support for new and innovative ideas, programs and services.

Standard Rating: Operational



Standard 3 Teaching & Learning



Standard Champions: Kevin Leonard, Rhonda Eves, and Char Cole

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. Both formative and summative assessment tests are administered yearly in all programs to measure student progress as required and needed.

Our agency philosophically believes, encourages, and promotes a variety of aligned and sustained staff development activities. 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 data more efficiently to drive academic decisions and is examining more formative testing methods including implementation of performance tasks for every program. Our most valuable resource is the ongoing alignment of curriculum exercises by all departments and the collegial dialogue that results. All HCISD employees are hired with the matching qualifications needed to complete the job assignment.

HCISD is very committed to instructional technology. All programs have access to basic and advanced Technology.

Standard Rating: Operational



Standard 4

Documenting & Using Results

Standard Champion: Pat Dillon



The HCISD use a variety of data sources to ensure agency 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. 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.

The HCISD expects all inter agency SIP teams to review student data on a regular basis as part of their culture. 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.

Continue



Standard 4, continued



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. 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.

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 encouraged and challenged each SIP team to inventory the data they used to drive their decision making. 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. Today the ISD is beginning the initiative of 'data mapping' and have secured the services of a consultant to guide several ISD departments to collect, organize and use data more efficiently.

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.

Standard Rating: Operational



Standard 5 Resource & Support Systems

Standard Champions: Joseph JC Morris and Belinda Shaffer



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 is recognized as a leader within Hillsdale County in the areas of human resources, finance and information technology. The HCISD ensures the financial resources of the agency by thoroughly analyzing, determining, and allocating funding where needed. 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.

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.

Continue



Standard 5, continued



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 21st Century learners.

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 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. 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.

Standard Rating: Operational



Standard 6 Stakeholder Communication & Relationships



Standard Champions: Judy Kochendorfer and Kim Svacha

The Hillsdale County Intermediate School District (HCISD) values the role all of its stakeholders play in the success of the agency, local districts and the 7200 county students. The agency recognizes it does not exist alone and this is reflected in its mission to the community. 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. Communicating expectations of stakeholder information is achieved using a variety of methods within the Hillsdale County Intermediate School District (HCISD) including a recently developed agency communication plan

Communicating expectations of stakeholder information is achieved using a variety of methods within the Hillsdale County Intermediate School District (HCISD). 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.

Standard Rating: Operational



Standard 7

Commitment to Improvement

Standard Champion: Pat Dillon



The HCISD is proud of the agency's recognition, commitment, and ever developing, SIP process. The HCISD has been very committed to school improvement for over two decades. We are fortunate to have the support of the HCISD Board and Administration and Rural Education Assistance Program (REAP) funding to incorporate a defined SIP process. In place is a district wide leadership team as well as building leadership teams and content specific teams committed to improvement and student success.

The improvement process fundamentals works like many other models for improvement. Our SIP efforts however are not just inter agency; we obviously work very close with our constituent districts to help them with their local and collaborative improvement efforts. The strategic process involves a needs study, determination of goals, alignment of strategies, and timely and monitored accountabilities.

Most notable, however, is how the needs are developed. Agency wide an emphasis on data and research "best practice" is paramount and required. Collaboratively we engage in a very active HCISD led monthly countywide associations: superintendents; elementary principals; MS/HS principals; and school counselors, all of which bring data to the table.

The HCISD is guided by its mission of being collaborative partners and educational innovators as it pertains to staff development for the agency, SIP teams and constituent districts. The agency works collaboratively to determine professional development activities based on its identification of individual, team, departmental, and agency needs established by study and interpretation of several data sources.

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.

Standard Rating: Operational



SAR Executive Summary



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.

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. 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.

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.



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.

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.



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.