

CIP ESEA Information

January 2019

The 2018-19 school year is the third year in the five-year continuous improvement process cycle for Hemingford Public Schools. The following information describes actions that have been taken throughout the cycle. All faculty members and administrators participate in the CIP process; CIP team leaders are Pete Gomez, Jill Hurtt, and Lauren Morava.

Summary of Data Analysis

Continuous improvement team leaders and members of the assessment committee examined the assessment data from a variety of tests, including NWEA MAPS, AQuESTT, NeSA, Accelerated Reader STARS, and the ACT. More specifically, team leaders paid particular attention to MAPS and NeSA data regarding students' reading, math, science, and writing skills to determine which areas were most in need of improvement at all grade levels. At one teacher in-service, all staff members participated in an activity to become familiar with MAPS data and to use the data to track student progress from one academic year to another. Team leaders presented data findings to the entire staff and discussed the implications of the data, which was used to formulate a CIP goal stating that "Our district will improve reading comprehension across the curriculum."

In addition, surveys of district employees, students, and parents/guardians were conducted beginning in the fall of 2017 and again in the fall of 2018. CIP team leaders, administrators, and members of the Culture and Climate Committee analyzed and discussed the data, which were also summarized for and discussed with all faculty members at an in-service. Examination of this data led to the formation of a CIP goal stating "Our district aspires to create a safe and welcoming environment for all stakeholders."

Goals and Objectives

As noted above, the entire faculty collaborated and agreed upon two CIP goals:

- Our district will improve reading comprehension across the curriculum (hereafter referred to as "reading comprehension goal").
- Our district aspires to create a safe and welcoming environment for all stakeholders (hereafter referred to as "climate and culture goal").

Initially, faculty members felt that writing should be a focus of one of the goals, but after analyzing the data and considering the difficulty of obtaining accurate data specifically regarding students' writing progress (particularly after the discontinuation of the NeSA writing assessment), the faculty determined that a goal focusing on reading comprehension was more pertinent. Improvement of writing has thus been folded into the reading comprehension goal,

with the idea that students who can formulate their thoughts and compose paragraphs and/or essays regarding material they have read will improve both writing and reading comprehension skills. Additional specific objectives to improve reading comprehension are currently being formulated.

With regard to the culture and climate goal, faculty members decided that focusing on more consistent discipline practices that are implemented in all grade levels and improved morale would be most beneficial. Specifically, the faculty felt that school culture and climate would be most improved by focusing on reducing both absenteeism and the number students who fail courses, and by decreasing the number of discipline issues, particularly office referrals. A further objective of the culture and climate goal is the improvement of staff and student morale through a variety of “community building” activities.

Action Plan: Reading Comprehension Goal

A basic initial objective of the reading comprehension goal, with a sub-focus on writing, was to standardize editing conventions across all grade levels. To that end, all faculty members attended a workshop with Ron Caniglia, who introduced his “Beautiful Creative Writing” system for editing and content revision. After receiving further training, select faculty members led an additional workshop to help teachers practice using this system in everyday writing assignments given to students. The workshop focused specifically on creating better sentences through creative content revision. Posters describing the color coded content revision and editing conventions of the BCS system were also distributed to each classroom for easy reference.

To strengthen the reading/writing curriculum and help teachers become more comfortable teaching specific writing strategies, all teachers and paraprofessionals who work with students in grades kindergarten through six have received training in the Lucy Calkins Writing Workshop, and will be implementing it in their classrooms to improve students’ writing beginning at an early age. English teachers at the 7-12 level also attended this training and will implement elements of the Writing Workshop into their lesson plans.

Additionally, the faculty supported the continued use of a rotating SSR (Sustained Silent Reading) period to encourage students to read for pleasure. Students have one class period every Tuesday and Thursday to read fiction or nonfiction books. Besides encouraging continued reading even into the upper levels of high school, SSR helps students build reading stamina and gives them the opportunity to view reading as a fun activity that provides a break from their ordinary routine. Classroom teachers and library staff also work together to ensure that students have a wide variety of reading materials available that is appropriate for different age/skill levels and student interests. Students and parents/guardians are also encouraged to utilize the Overdrive

online book lending service, which allows digital checkouts and downloads of a large selection of books that might be difficult to find elsewhere.

In addition, juniors and seniors have access to the John Baylor Test Prep online program to help them review skills in reading, math, science, and writing. Juniors complete part of this program during class, and also work with their English teacher to improve their writing skills by examining writing prompts and model responses to those prompts and then discussing how the responses could be improved. They subsequently use these ideas to write their own responses to a variety of prompts.

The faculty will be meeting in February and March of 2019 to examine other options to improve reading comprehension, such as intervention strategies (both in the classroom and via Title I and SPED services), curriculum alignment, and parent/guardian outreach.

Action Plan: Climate and Culture Goal

Faculty, staff, and administration are currently implementing a variety of measures to improve the school's overall climate and environment. Initially, faculty members met to re-formulate the district's mission and vision statements, which were streamlined for clarity and reworded to more closely reflect the culture and climate goal. The new mission and vision statements were distributed throughout all buildings, and teachers were asked to help students consider these statements and how they are related to the everyday activities in which students engage.

Mission Statement: Empowering individuals to be resourceful, respectful, and responsible lifelong learners.

Vision Statement: Our vision at Hemingford Public Schools is to cooperatively work with parents and the community to provide a safe and healthy learning environment for all students. We provide and promote opportunities for high academic achievement, capitalizing on student career interests and aptitudes while encouraging student involvement and accomplishments to prepare accountable, responsible, self-disciplined, successful citizens for a changing global society.

Members of the PK-6 faculty met and discussed the behavior expectations that they believe should be put in effect at those grade levels; faculty at the 7-12 level did the same. After discussing basic expectations, a rubric was formulated with the help of the Culture and Climate Committee for both of the two school levels. The rubrics address student behavior in common areas (hallways, lunch room, playground, etc.) as well as in the classroom. This rubric will be distributed throughout all buildings and will be included in the more specific behavior expectations that individual teachers develop for their classrooms.

Additionally, the opinions of school employees, students, and parents/guardians are being assessed annually via an online survey. All students in grades 3-12 take the survey, and parents and guardians have the opportunity to take the survey at parent-teacher conferences or individually online through a link on the school website. These surveys assist the various committees in assessing areas that are strengths as well as weaknesses within the district.

Both employee and student responses indicated that increased recognition for good work would be greatly appreciated. For example, administrators plan to recognize more students for academic excellence via increased publicity of students who are on the honor role or distinguished list. Students can also be nominated for recognition of good deeds and strong work ethics via the school's online social media platforms or in-school bulletins, such as those that air on the cafeteria televisions each day. Other options for recognition of excellent work by students and staff are currently being considered, such as "student of the month" profiles.

Teachers have also indicated that they have concerns regarding the number of students who fail classes and jeopardize their chance to graduate, as well as chronic absenteeism that clearly contributes to poor grades. A new activity eligibility policy was adopted for the 2018-19 school year, and weekly statistics regarding the number of students who are failing one or more classes are being collected to ascertain the policy's effectiveness. A new program called "School Within a School" began during the second semester of 2018; it is designed to help students who have failed classes to make up the credits that they need to graduate via an online curriculum that they can work on at their own pace.

In addition, teachers are working to make their classrooms more welcoming and encourage greater student participation by increasing student engagement, providing more positive feedback to students, and building teacher-student relationships. Teachers are striving to increase student engagement through the use of technology and various online resources designed to allow more students to participate in class and demonstrate learning. The district is also transitioning to the use of the Danielson model for teacher evaluation, and professional development that has been part of this transition has given teachers time to reflect on their current teaching practices and ways that they could improve in such areas as student engagement and classroom management. All teachers complete suicide prevention training annually. Faculty and staff have also been working to ensure that every student in the school has a connection with at least one adult in the school system with whom they feel comfortable discussing problems or celebrating achievements.

The students are also working to improve morale at the school via a variety of activities. Students have the opportunity to join several organizations designed to help them develop their strengths and build a sense of community, including athletics, FCCLA, National Honor Society,

FFA, Health Professions Club, and Fellowship of Christian Athletes, among others. Besides the homecoming activities that the student council has traditionally planned, they have recently implemented new measures to improve both student and teacher morale. For instance, “Warm Fuzzy Wednesdays” give students a chance to meet before school and share hot cocoa or cider and inspirational quotes, and the “March Madness” game night held in 2018 allowed students to meet to play games and socialize in a safe environment that was welcoming to all high school students. Student council members have also been involved in a number of holiday activities, such as hanging decorations and organizing a gift exchange. In addition, students in the FCCLA participate in a “Big Brother Big Sister” program in which they spend time each month doing an activity with students in second grade, and National Honor Society students conduct community service projects. At the end of the 2017-18 school year, 7-12 students also participated in a schoolwide service project that included a number of tasks, including trash pickup and maintenance of the fairgrounds.

Morale and good behavior in the elementary school are also emphasized. During the current school year, students and teachers in the elementary grades have focused on kindness to one another. Additionally, students are introduced to an anti-bullying curriculum at a young age; this is now being supplemented by age-appropriate discussions of digital citizenship. These discussions are continued at the junior high and high school levels.

School employees are also working to better support one another and build relationships. Many employees consider their colleagues to be a kind of “family,” and the recent focus on improving morale has generated discussions of different methods to improve this sense of family both inside and outside of school. Employees have enjoyed the annual holiday gift exchanges and the year-end barbecue and retirement celebration for many years. The annual holiday employee party was held for the first time in several years, and staff members are currently considering other activities meant to build a greater sense of community and collegiality.

Additional Information

Notes from committee meetings, data analyses, survey result summaries, and copies of all materials used at school improvement in-services are available on request.