

**School Improvement
External Team
Visitation Report
for
Nebraska Framework Schools**

Pleasanton Public Schools

Pleasanton, Nebraska

03/21/2017



NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Pleasanton Public Schools External Visitation Team

Bill Gilbreath, Principal/Axtell Community School

Sara Paider, Principal/St. Paul Public Schools

Jason Everett, Staff Development, Systems Engineer/ESU 11

Craig Badura, Technology Integration Specialist/Aurora Public Schools

Pleasanton Public Schools
External Team Visit Agenda
03/21/2017

8:30-8:45	Arrival of External Team Members Welcome by host school representatives, refreshments, orientation, internet connections, etc.
8:45-9:00	Tour of the Building
9:00-9:30	Team Orientation Facilitated by Bill Gilbreath, team chair
9:30-10:15	Host Team Presentation Formal presentation by steering committee and/or leadership team Chronology of School Improvement Process Overview of Data Gathering Process Decisions made/goals identified based upon concerns in 2012 Strategies/Interventions Implemented Successes/Continued Challenges Questions/Recommendations for the Day
10:15-10:25	Break
10:25-10:45	Reading Action Plan Review Interview with Vickie Lammers (Reading Specialist) and Denise Giffin (Elementary Resource)
10:45-11:00	Communication Action Plan Review Interview with Tracy Brummer (PowerSchool Administrator/Social Media Administrator)
11:00-11:30	Interview with Students (Distance Learning Room) 12 th Grade: Braden Hadwiger, Kayla Stubbs; 11 th Grade: Hunter Paitz, Keri Bauer; 10 th grade: Tyler Pawloski, Emily Zimmer; 9 th Grade: Paige Weisdorfer, Eric Epley
11:30-12:00	Technology Action Plan review
12:00-1:00	Working Lunch
1:00-3:00	External Team has the opportunity to interview staff and students of their choice, visit classrooms, and work on reports
3:00-3:30	Exit Report to Administration External report verbally given to the school administration and SIP Chairmen. Discuss what will be presented to staff.
3:40-4:00	Oral Exit Report to Staff External report verbally given to all staff in the Distance Learning "Blue Room"

Introductory Comments

Bill Gilbreath

A. Purpose of the External Visitation

The specific purposes for the external team visit to Pleasanton Public Schools were to A. Review the district's current CSIP goals and the action plans implemented for those goals: 1) Reading Comprehension (Focus on the instruction of reading). 2) Technology Integration (Integrate technology in all curriculum areas). 3) Effective Communication at all Levels; B. Recognize progress towards the district School Improvement Goals; and C. Offer suggestions for continued implementation of those goals.

B. Description of the Process for Gathering Information for the External Team Report

Prior to the external visit, team members reviewed the profile provided in the "External Team Report, Pleasanton Public Schools, 2012-2017". On the day of the visit external team members were given a tour of the building. Following this tour, the external team members gathered to discuss first impressions and to divide interview and observation responsibilities. Then, steering committee spokespersons presented the Continuous School Improvement Process Goals. These spokespersons shared information concerning the following: 1) The chronology of Pleasanton Public School's CSIP, 2) Data gathering, 3) Goal identification in 2012, 4) Strategies and interventions; and 5) Successes and challenges. This was followed by school staff review presentations of the action plans for each of the goals and interviews with students. The external team members reconvened, reviewed their findings, and prepared individual narratives which were used to prepare the "School Improvement External Team Visitation Report for Nebraska Framework Schools" for the Pleasanton Public Schools District. Elements of these narratives were also used to prepare an exit report given at the conclusion of the visitation.

C. Background Information Specific to the District

Pleasanton Public Schools is a Class D school district located 20 miles north of Kearney in the village of Pleasanton, Nebraska. That Pleasanton patrons support a quality education is evident by the passing of levy overrides in 2001, 2003, 2005 and 2009 and the passing of a \$8.995 million bond issue in 2013. The district believes that everyone can learn and excel in a positive environment and that the quality of education improves with the cooperation of student, staff, parents, and community. This is achieved by offering the tools necessary for life-long learning, by instilling attitudes to produce responsible citizens who can cope and adapt in an ever-changing global community, and by encouraging excellence.

Pleasanton Public schools is a 100% apple school for education. Students in grades 7-11 are assigned an ipad for school use. Seniors are assigned a Macbook Air laptop for school

use. There are apple TV's in every classroom, along with projectors. Elementary students in grades 4-6 have a shared ipad to use throughout the day, and there are ipad carts and laptop carts for checkout in both the high school and elementary. Long distance learning classes and Early Entry College classes are also offered at Pleasanton Public Schools.

D. Additional Remarks, etc.

Successful schools are dynamic places with high expectations for everyone. Effective school improvement happens by design and is built around goals that educators, parents, and community members support. Therefore, School Improvement is a continual process adjusting when and where the data instructs. Lawrence Lezotte and Kathleen McKee Snyder describe school improvement in their book *Assembly Required* as “a never-ending cycle of self examination and adjustment.” Successful schools and districts continually ask. *How are we doing? What can we do better?* Pleasanton Public Schools is a successful district because it continually asks these questions and closely examines the answers that are generated.

The External Visitation Team members extend our appreciation for the hospitality, support, and professionalism exhibited towards us by everyone connected with Pleasanton Public Schools. We also wish to offer our respect and acknowledgement of the dedicated staff and our congratulations for your School Improvement efforts.

Overview of Improvement Process

Reviewer's Names: Bill Gilbreath, Sara Paider, Jason Everett, Craig Badura

I. **Commendations: (Successful Activities, Procedures and Accomplishments in the Overall Progress of the School Improvement Process)**

The External Visitation Team commends Pleasanton Public Schools for:

- The new school building that results in a pride shared by the staff and students, creating a culture described by one external team member as “a vibrant tapestry.”
- The openness of staff and students to each other, to new ideas, and to change.
- A willingness to highlight not only the successes of the district, but also the areas that need improvement.
- Student focus is evident in the classrooms, in the hallways, and in every nook and cranny of the facility.
- The ability of the Board of Education to transition to new leadership, i.e., the superintendent. The former superintendent's contributions should be acknowledged—he placed the district in the position to grow in student numbers and in facility improvements. The new superintendent has allowed what was working to continue working, and he is moving forward with improvements which staff members have embraced and accepted in a relaxed atmosphere.
- A staff that collaborates well. There is a district-wide atmosphere of family.

II. **Recommendations for Next Steps in the Overall School Improvement Process**

The External Visitation Team recommends that Pleasanton Public Schools:

- Continue district-wide—parents, students, staff, and administrators— involvement in the continuous School Improvement Process.
- Continue the student-centered approach to the continuous School Improvement Process.
- Create intentional time for cooperation across grade levels.
- Continue to do what you are doing to empower students to succeed.

School Improvement Goals

- Goal I: Reading Comprehension.**
Improve reading comprehension scores among all students. (Focus on the instruction of reading).
- Goal II: Technology Integration.**
Integrate technology in all curriculum areas.
- Goal III: Facilitate communications at all levels within and from the school district.**

Goal Report

Reviewer's Names: Bill Gilbreath, Sara Paider, Jason Everett, Craig Badura

I. Reading Comprehension. Improve reading comprehension scores among all students. (Focus on the instruction of reading).

II. Comments About the Student Performance Goal (including goals, assessments, interventions/strategies, and/or staff development)

Based on the interview with the reading specialists, the conversation held that individual/small groups worked best to differentiate content and skill level for students. That would hold true in all content areas and grade levels such that I'd recommend researching several concepts bubbling up in education buzz. These would include blended learning, personalized learning, competency based education, mastery based learning, as well as other forms of these frameworks. This would be no small feat to implement systematically through the district and so would recommend researching how it may fit in with the longer term vision and goals for the district as well as having a few pilot teachers implement and test the process.

III. Successful Activities or Strategies

The External Visitation Team recognizes the following as successful activities and strategies at Pleasanton Public Schools:

- Reading data overall is strong with most classes scoring at 80% or above proficient.
- The Reading program is taught with fidelity in most classrooms.
- The current program was implemented without the assistance of an outside reading consultant.

IV. Recommendations for Next Steps

The External Visitation Team recommends the following as next steps at Pleasanton Public Schools:

- Writing scores appear low across the grade levels at the elementary level. Consider implementing a new language curriculum that emphasizes writing.
- Reading data is strong, but it has reached a plateau. Consider giving teachers a scheduled time that is student free to analyze data, so that reading success can continue to grow.
- Consider implementing a different summative assessment. Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) can provide immediate feedback and has the ability to provide multiple reports that can focus on individual students as well as whole classes.
- In order to continue to grow your reading data, consider implementing in the elementary a scheduled intervention time so your most qualified staff (teachers) can work with your neediest students.

Goal Report

Reviewer's Names: Bill Gilbreath, Sara Paider, Jason Everett, Craig Badura

I. Technology Integration

Integrate technology in all curriculum areas.

II. Comments About (including goals, assessments, interventions/strategies, and/or staff development)

The teachers own the data that is gathered. Students involvement in social media is encouraged and monitored. There is a solid communication bridge between students and administration. Technology is two-fold: Infrastructure and Human. Based on the provided data, interviews and observation, teachers and students have the basic set of skills to use technology in the classroom.

III. Successful Activities and Strategies

The External Visitation Team recognizes the following as successful activities and strategies at Pleasanton Public Schools:

- Openness and transparency are a part of the culture of the school. Both Randy and Bob (and others we talked to) are very willing to highlight points they wanted to work on. They were very reflective and had a growth mindset in terms of wanting to improve.
- The hardware and infrastructure are in place and there are already conversations taking place for how to remedy wireless issues as well as looking forward to updating devices and how to get devices in the hands of all students at all grade levels. While technology continues to change, there is a vision to continue to keep updated in that area.

IV. Recommendations for Next Steps

The External Visitation Team recommends the following as next steps at Pleasanton Public Schools:

- Based on the provided data, interviews, and observation, teachers and students have the basic set of skills to use technology in the classroom. Moving forward, we'd recommend either hiring a Technology Integration Specialist and/or creating more time for teaching staff to be able to research, implement, reflect on, and share technology integration with others. Using a model such as SAMR or the ISTE Standards may provide a helpful framework. Your ESU will have suggestions as well as using tools such as the BrightBytes Insights and Action Plans.
- Loosening the filter will provide access to more resources for both teaching staff and students. The concern is always what students may access but researching technology options such as GoGuardian or other device management tools will help provide an accounting for students that is individual and not a blanket approach to blocking. The

other side is, again, the human side and classroom management of the device usage. The best app for this type of management is called the “2Eyes” app. (The Best App for Monitoring Students)

- It is recommended using a centralized platform for staff/student communication. The obvious choices would be either Schoology or G Suite since these tools already exist and are being used in the district. Using Schoology or G Suite would allow not only for classroom resources and activities to be shared with students but groups to be created for staff. Collaboration can take place and resources stored and shared for the continuous school improvement process, curriculum alignment and development, PD opportunities and resources, and any other group or organization that would need to want to collaborate and share resources. Having a "one stop shop" for all types of communication and collaboration amongst teachers, students, administration and staff, (and possibly board/community/others) would improve efficiency and effectiveness of knowledge and resource sharing and generally provide for better communication and collaboration district wide. Alternate uses of your LMS
- It is recommended that there be time given to teachers to be able to learn the best ways to use the data available to them as well as building action plans for the use of the data.
- It is recommended that students play some sort of role in social media for the school. Many different approaches were identified such as giving one student the “key” for the day, having a team of students provide SM content, or work with staff in providing SM content to patrons using these different outlets.
- It is recommended that work continue on building a communication bridge between students and administration such that students know who they can go to to formally express their views and concerns. Work is currently happening at the student council level and discussions led to possible student involvement at board meetings or other district planning events.

Goal Report

Reviewer's Names: Bill Gilbreath, Sara Paider, Jason Everett, Craig Badura

I. Facilitate communications at all levels within and from the school district.

II. Comments About the Student Performance Goal (including goals, assessments, interventions/strategies, and/or staff development)

Staff collaboration seems abundant with cross-communication and projects that were not just in one area. For example, the librarian worked with other staff members for a variety of projects throughout the year. Industrial Technology working with math concepts to help give validation to math concepts. Cross curricular communication and projects help students gain real-world validation for what they are doing in class. Also, communication with patrons and parents is an essential element of the success and culture of Pleasanton Public Schools.

III. Successful Activities or Strategies

The External Visitation Team recognizes the following as successful activities and strategies at Pleasanton Public Schools:

- It seems that All call is very popular among parents, staff, and students.
- Communication is strong within the district from administration to staff. The recent change in administration can be attributed to a change in leadership.
- The newsletter is very popular and accessible on the district webpage.
- Management of the communication platform (Facebook, Twitter, website) is going well. This is a hard task to run all of these.

IV. Recommendations for Next Steps

The External Visitation Team recommends the following as next steps at Pleasanton Public Schools:

- Consider becoming a STRIV school. Taylor Siebert does an amazing job assisting with school needs in regards to communications, plus he can come in and work with school newspaper students/faculty to help this become more of a digital focus.
- Consider the use of Classroom Intercom to better manage and facilitate social media.
- Consider having administration use teacher managed tools within Schoology to better communicate with teachers. Setting up courses, etc.
- Perhaps create a district hashtag that can be used across social media platforms. Encourage teachers, students, and patrons to post to their social media accounts using this designated hashtag.