

**Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Level 4 Monitoring Summative Report**

District: Southbridge Public Schools
Plan Monitor: Dr. Nadine Bonda

School Year: 2011-2012
Date of Report: October 24, 2012

Introduction

The Southbridge School District under the leadership of Eric Ely began work on its Accelerated Improvement Plan (AIP) in the 2011-2012 school year. The plan was developed to address seven issues identified by the leadership team:

Issue 1: Inconsistent curriculum, quality of instruction and student support programs.

Issue 2: High turnover of curriculum programs and professional development initiatives.

Issue 3: Lack of integrated professional development systems.

Issue 4: Data only loosely informing practice.

Issue 5: Collaboration is not central to professional practice.

Issue 6: Accountability for outcomes is not real. And,

Issue 7: Too few students graduate and fewer are college and career ready.

Because the Southbridge Public School District took until late April 2012 to develop an Accelerated Improvement Plan that had the potential to increase student achievement, only foundational components of the plan were implemented in 2011-2012 and the district was not able to reach beyond the technical implementation stage on any of its strategic objectives.

The superintendent reported that some successes of the AIP in the 2011-2012 school year included: the implementation of the structure of an integrated service model for all students; the development of a cycle of inquiry for data analysis and the opportunity for all administrators to practice it; the embedding of learning walks in practice and the expansion to include teachers in some schools in the learning walks; the establishment of common expectations for both formal and informal walkthroughs by administrators; and the establishment and training of a district data team.

The superintendent reported that some impediments to accomplishing the goals of the AIP included resistance by stakeholders to recognizing the implications of a level 4 rating and the readiness of administrators and teachers to take on such new concepts as data analysis and planning following that analysis, new delivery approaches such as Response to Intervention (RTI) and an integrated service model, and better ways to

engage students in their learning. The superintendent reported that there was a presumption that certain systems existed that did not; these systems had to be created, including a thorough curriculum and a strong assessment and data inquiry model.

The superintendent worked with his leadership team and the school committee to reorganize the district from schools that were Pre K-1, 2-3, 4-5, 6-8, 9-12 to a configuration with many fewer transitions for students. The new configuration consists of one Pre K-K school, two grade 1-5 schools and a grade 6-12 middle/high school. This reorganization coincided with the opening of a beautiful new middle/high school that the town had been planning for ten years.

AIP Objectives

Objective 1: Implement high quality curriculum and instruction programs to support the achievement of all students.

Foundational work was begun in this area. By the end of the 2011-2012 school year there were curriculum committees established for both English language arts (ELA) and math to map curriculum and begin the process of producing a curriculum aligned with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks (which incorporate the Common Core State Standards). Supplemental materials to augment an older math program were in the process of being identified and purchased. This work is planned to continue throughout the 2012-2013 school year.

The district has developed and trained all teachers and administrators in a document called the Southbridge Standard. This document defines high quality instruction for all students. The Southbridge Standard will form the basis for administrators to examine classroom practice and to design professional development for teachers to help build their instructional skills.

The district implemented the structure of an integrated service model for all students. Administrators were trained in the Response to Intervention (RTI) model of tiered instruction to address the needs of every student, but particularly those who need extra support.

Plans have been designed to introduce Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) into all schools in the coming school year in order to ensure safe and productive schools and classrooms.

An important practice that the superintendent has put into place this year is Learning Walks. A group of administrators walk through classrooms in a given school and then discuss instructional trends in that school. By the end of the school year, some teachers were included in those learning walks. With help from the District and School Assistance Center (DSAC), work was done this spring to calibrate administrative responses to observations.

Objective 2: Establish a data driven culture to support and monitor the achievement of all students.

Again, foundational work was begun during the 2011-2012 school year on this Objective. Southbridge has been using Galileo benchmark assessments for the past few years. This continued, but was not done with integrity at every school. In addition, because teachers had not been trained in how to use data to inform instruction, limited information was garnered from the results.

A district data team was formed and trained by the DSAC to begin to examine data on a district level. An inquiry cycle was designed and vetted and redesigned. All administrators were trained in the use of the data inquiry cycle. Achievement Network (ANet) did some preliminary work in the district with teachers and administrators to help them understand the assessment process and how the analysis of data could be useful in their planning and teaching. The District has planned for this process to be formalized and used in working with all grade 2-8 teachers in the 2012-2013 school year.

The third initiative under this Objective addressed the new educator evaluation system. The superintendent, teachers' association president, and school committee began the work of coming to agreement on a new evaluation policy for the district. As of June 2012, a new policy had not yet been negotiated.

Objective 3: Provide high quality professional development programs to support the achievement of all learners/students.

Professional development needs were determined and limited training was begun. Administrators learned how to observe classes for rigorous instruction. They also learned how to use the newly revised data inquiry model. All administrators did some initial training in RTI. Teachers received some professional development on how to implement the integrated service model for special needs students. At some grades, training was provided on the co-teaching model. Planning was done to identify PBIS as a system to address social and behavioral issues with students. Training is planned for the 2012-2013 school year. Some initial work was begun with teachers and administrators on how to best support the learning of English language learners (ELL) and students with disabilities.

Professional development was begun in several areas but not deeply implemented in any specific areas. Thus, this Objective remains at the early technical implementation stage.

Progress and Performance Ratings

As part of their quarterly reporting, ESE Accountability Monitors assign each district two categories of ratings for each Strategic Initiative in the Accelerated Improvement Plan. Each category is based on a four-level rubric designed to communicate to stakeholders the extent of the district's progress toward successful implementation of each Initiative. *Improvement Process ratings* indicate the degree to which the district has implemented and embedded the key practices of a given Initiative. In this category, districts receive one of the following ratings for each Initiative: Fully Embedded; Practices in Place; Technical Implementation; or Problematic Implementation/At Risk. *Performance ratings* describe the results

the district has achieved based on the benchmarks in a given Initiative. In this category, districts receive one of the following ratings for each Initiative: Reached High Performance Goals Consistently; Reached Performance Goals; Partially Reached Performance Goals; or Performance Goals Not Reached.

The Strategic Initiatives in the Southbridge Public School District's Accelerated Improvement Plan were modified over the course of the 2011-2012 school year. Most Initiatives were rated as being at the Technical Implementation stage and were rated as Partially Reached Performance Goals in the Performance category. By the end of the year, none of the twelve Initiatives were yet at the "Practices in Place" stage and one Initiative met the "Reached Performance Goals" target. The following five Initiatives were rated as Problematic Implementation/At Risk and as Performance Goals Not Reached:

- *Initiative 1.4: Engage parents and community members to support implementation of the Accelerated Improvement Plan*
- *Initiative 2.3: Implement new supervision and evaluation process to support and monitor professional growth*
- *Initiative 2.4: Establish parent and community committees to support and monitor student achievement*
- *Initiative 3.1: Provide training and support in implementing new curriculum units and assessment cycle*
- *Initiative 3.4: Provide training and support to parents and community partners to promote understanding of all components of the Accelerated Improvement Plan*

The Initiatives listed above, with the exception of Initiative 3.4, are included in Southbridge's 2012-2013 Accelerated Improvement Plan, and therefore will receive quarterly ratings as the districts continues to work toward effective implementation of the Plan.

In the first year of the Accelerated Improvement Plan process, the Southbridge Public School District did not meet the final outcomes established in its Accelerated Improvement Plan, which were based on student proficiency in ELA and math. 2011 and 2012 MCAS data for all students and for high needs¹ students are noted in Tables 1 and 2. In the second year of the Accelerated Improvement Plan process, all districts have established final outcomes based on a Progress and Performance Index (PPI) of 75.

Overall, Southbridge's levels of student proficiency and student growth decreased between 2011 and 2012. See Tables 1 and 2. In the aggregate, the Composite Performance Index (CPI), which measures proficiency, decreased in ELA (with a -2.4 CPI change) and in math (with a -3.8 CPI change). A similar pattern was seen in the performance of the "high needs" subgroup (73% of Southbridge's 2,205 students). Overall proficiency for high needs students decreased in ELA (with a -2.8 CPI change) and in math (with a -4.1 CPI change). The median SGP in ELA was essentially unchanged for the aggregate and high needs groups (with a 1.0 SGP change for both groups). The district's median SGP in math decreased by 9.0 percentiles in the aggregate and by 10.0 percentiles for high needs students. Although the Southbridge Public School District achieved little

¹ *Defined as students who fall into at least one of the following categories: low-income students, English language learners, former English language learners, or students with disabilities.*

improvement in student performance or growth, the district took steps to build a foundation and establish some systems necessary to create a throughline from district practice to the classroom level in order to promote improved student outcomes.

Table 1: Composite Performance Index (CPI)²

Aggregate					High needs				
Year	District		State		Year	District		State	
	ELA	Math	ELA	Math		ELA	Math	ELA	Math
2011	72.0	64.0	87.2	79.9	2011	67.8	59.8	77.0	67.1
2012	69.6	60.2	86.7	79.9	2012	65.0	55.7	76.5	67.0
Change	-2.4	-3.8	0.5	0.0	Change	-2.8	-4.1	-0.5	-0.1

Table 2: Median Student Growth Percentile (SGP)³

Aggregate					High needs				
Year	District		State		Year	District		State	
	ELA	Math	ELA	Math		ELA	Math	ELA	Math
2011	40.0	41.0	50.0	50.0	2011	38.0	40.0	46.0	46.0
2012	41.0	32.0	50.0	50.0	2012	39.0	30.0	46.0	46.0
Change	1.0	-9.0	0.0	0.0	Change	1.0	-10.0	0.0	0.0

Ongoing Work

According to Superintendent Ely, there was a great investment of time and effort during the summer of 2012 in order to prepare teachers and administrators for the hard work in the 2012-2013 school year. Six days of administrative training set the stage for administrators to focus on what

² Differences of more than 2.5 CPI points are more likely to be educationally meaningful than differences of fewer than 2.5 points, which are likely not educationally meaningful.

³ Typical student growth percentiles are between about 40 and 60 on most tests. Groups outside this range have higher or lower than typical growth. Differences of more than 10 SGP points are more likely to be educationally meaningful than differences of fewer than 10 SGP points, which are likely not educationally meaningful.

needs to be done in 2012-2013. A full day was spent with representatives from both Achievement Network and the District and School Assistance Center to help administrators look closely at data results from the past year. They learned the data inquiry cycle by comparing 6th grade special education results from last year to the preliminary results from this year's MCAS. They looked at what the data says and how it will inform next steps. They also discussed possible reasons for the results. This will lead them into developing a feedback protocol based on a "Here's what. So what? Now what?" model, which includes forming "headlines" about what the data is telling them. District leaders also worked on linking professional development to the assessment calendar.

Four days of the administrative training were spent on training all administrators in both RTI and PBIS. As well, administrators worked on calibrating observations for learning walks, examining the new World-class Instructional Design and Assistance (WIDA) standards for English language learners, and familiarizing themselves with the new ELA and math frameworks.

In addition, for teachers, coaches and directors, there was data coaching, Advanced Placement training for new Advanced Placement courses added, Pre- Advanced Placement training, Keys to Literacy training, Foundations training, training on teaching ELLs, and coaching for directors on the data inquiry cycle.

Work was also done during the summer on establishing a parent advisory committee for parents of ELL students and another for parents of students with disabilities. In addition, all postings for new teachers now state that ELL certification is preferred.

Summary and Recommendations

In order to see substantial change in student achievement in the near future, all Southbridge administrators and the school committee need to work together and send a clear and strong message to teachers, staff, parents and the community that the AIP will drive the work of all employees of the school district. All aspects of the plan need to be implemented with integrity and monitored for accuracy of implementation. The implementation should be evaluated monthly with attention to identifying areas of need. Ongoing data collection that addresses the early evidence and short- and long-term outcomes will help keep the district on a strong course of implementation.

To implement the AIP effectively, the district should:

- Complete the curriculum in math and ELA.
- Train and hold all teachers accountable for using the new curriculum documents.
- Ensure that there are embedded practices in all classrooms to ensure high quality education for all students.
- Train, implement, and monitor the RTI model for tiers I, II, and III.
- Train all faculties in the PBIS model to ensure that all students are in safe and orderly classrooms.
- Engage parents and community members in the implementation of the AIP.

- Establish a system of data collection, analysis, and informed implementation at both the district level and the school level that is used by every teacher to plan and inform instruction.
- Monitor the data system and hold all teachers accountable for using data to make their teaching more effective.
- Train staff in the new educator evaluation process early in the year.
- Create a professional development plan to address all initiatives described in the AIP.
- Report regularly to the school committee on all aspects of the AIP.

It is only with a unified effort of the school committee, Southbridge Public School's employees, and the community that this plan can be successful. We look forward to seeing greater levels of success reached by the district as we continue monitoring the district's Accelerated Improvement Plan in the 2012-2013 school year.