

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

District: Gill-Montague Regional School District
Plan Monitor: Joan Connolly

School Year: 2011-2012
Date of Report: October 23, 2012

Introduction

Under the leadership of Interim Superintendent Nadine Ekstrom, the Gill-Montague Regional School District made consistent progress toward meeting the goals in most areas of the Accelerated Improvement Plan since beginning the work in July 2011. Much of the work done during this first year has been of a technical nature, putting in place the systems necessary to get to the core work of instructional change and improvement in order to raise student achievement. Building on these technical changes, impact is beginning to be seen in some classrooms, especially at the elementary level. This is evidenced through documented administrator observations. While there were some increases in student achievement based on interim assessment data, more work is needed for the district to achieve “accelerated” improvement. Union leadership has worked collaboratively in both the development and early stages of implementation of the AIP.

There have been many changes at the administrative level including a new Interim Superintendent. One of the two elementary principals is new, as is the director of Special Education. A consulting firm has taken over the finance and operations functions in the district. Former Interim Superintendent Ekstrom restructured the administrative team at the middle/high school levels. There previously was one principal for grades 6-12 and two assistant principals. Now there is a principal of the high school, a principal of the middle school, and one assistant principal for grades 6-12.

Following a review by DESE, the areas listed below were identified as needing significant improvement:

- 1) Lack of complete, aligned curriculum
- 2) Professional development structures unable to support necessary professional development
- 3) Lack of common understandings regarding data use
- 4) Teacher evaluation instrument does not promote overall effectiveness

The AIP was developed with the goal of addressing the following key issues as identified in the district review, with the goal of accelerating change and improvement in order to raise student achievement.

Key Issue: The district's curriculum is not consistently aligned with state standards. An aligned curriculum is needed to ensure instruction is provided allowing students to master grade level standards. Student outcomes are below state averages and do not show significant growth.

Key Issue: The district does not have a clear system for analyzing data. There is variation in understanding regarding the assessment initiatives. Necessary structures are not in place for effective use of data to assess curriculum or other programs. Use of data will be a key factor in curriculum decisions and resource allocation.

Key Issue: The professional development plan is not able to address district needs. Professional development time must be allocated to address curriculum alignment, use of best practices, and use of data. The district will establish various means of providing PD, critical to district improvement.

Key Issue: The teacher evaluation tool does not promote growth or overall effectiveness. The teacher evaluation tool will be redesigned in alignment with new teacher evaluation guidelines. The goal will be increasing effective instruction as seen by improved student outcomes.

AIP Objectives

Objective 1: To improve the performance of all students through high quality instruction measured through a system of data collection and analysis.

During the first year of implementation of the AIP, an aligned curriculum in both English language arts (ELA) and mathematics was put in place and curriculum maps were written. Classroom observations, especially at the elementary level, were focused on looking for evidence of the implementation of standards based instruction and district determined best practices. Frequent feedback and support from administrators to teachers regarding instructional changes was documented. More evidence was provided from the elementary schools than at the middle and high schools.

Mentoring was provided to principals from mentors, a Principal Network Group, and district leaders. The district invested the resources of time and money to support Walkthrough training for both administrators and teachers. The Walkthroughs are designed to identify the use of best practices across the grades and to give general feedback on potential instructional changes to engage and motivate students. A Gill-Montague Learning Walkthrough Handbook was developed to ensure consistency in the use of this practice across grades and schools in the district. This handbook will be used in the 2012-2013 school year.

Strong efforts were made during the year to develop and maintain a communication system that is focused on keeping all stakeholders informed about the centrality of the work on the AIP to drive the work of the system. Plans were developed to better inform parents about their children's academic performance. Changes have been made to report cards, including language that is aligned with new curriculum maps, and parent conferences have been changed to coincide with NWEA and DIBELS assessments.

Objective 2: To utilize student outcome data to modify curriculum, improve teaching and learning for all students, and identify professional development needs.

A districtwide benchmark assessment system was developed and administered consistently across all grades. Some planning was done to ensure clear and consistent progress monitoring by all teachers to make the best use of the results of interim assessments. Time and training was provided to teachers to support them in differentiating instruction for their students based on assessment results. Training was also provided to administrators and coaches to improve their skills in analyzing test results and using those results to support teachers in making instructional changes. Significant gains in student achievement were not made during the first year of the use of interim assessments. Significant work will be required during school year 2012-2013 to achieve the AIP Short-term Outcome of students reaching 70% proficiency in reading and mathematics on benchmark testing.

Objective 3: To provide professional development resulting in improved teaching practice and student outcomes as measured by classroom observations, teacher evaluations of professional development, and improved student outcomes.

The Gill-Montague school district has devoted significant time and resources to providing professional development to both teachers and administrators to support them in their efforts to improve student outcomes. This time is provided through release and after school time, by coaches during collaborative meeting time, and through individual mentoring and participation in leadership networks for administrators. Evidence was provided that indicates that elementary principals in particular were frequently in classrooms and gave ongoing feedback to teachers about their practice. A Professional Development Plan for the school year 2012-2013 has been completed which outlines plans for training and support for teachers to use differentiated instruction and to implement the new Educator Evaluation System. A procedure has been developed that outlines how administrators are to identify staff in need of training in specific areas. Another system has been developed which tracks staff members who are in need of training in programs to which the system has made a significant, long-term commitment.

Objective 4: To create a teacher evaluation tool that promotes collaboration, student centered learning, and the use of research based instructional practices that result in improved student outcomes.

Some training on the new Educator Evaluation system was provided to teachers and administrators during the school year 2011-2012. Further training was provided during the summer of 2012 for administrators. While evidence was provided that shows that a collaborative group was formed to create a draft educator evaluation tool, it is not clear that the tool is based on the DESE guidelines for the new Educator Evaluation System. Based on the evidence provided, implementation of the new Educator Evaluation System appears to be in early stages of development. There has been significant change in personnel at the leadership level so that the summer training is all that they have received. The new superintendent reported that administrators trained teachers on the morning of August 27th on the rubrics of the new Evaluation System.

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 progress, or lack thereof, to district stakeholders. *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 Gill-Montague Regional School District earned generally consistent ratings in each category throughout the 2011-2012 school year. Most of the district's Strategic Initiatives were consistently 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, three of the fourteen Initiatives were at the "Practices in Place" stage and no Initiatives yet met the "Reached Performance Goals" target. Ratings for the following Initiative improved over the course of the school year, showing that the work became more effectively implemented:

- *Initiative 2.1: Interim and benchmark assessments will be established and administered PK – 12 evaluating students' mastery of grade level standards:* Improved from Technical Implementation to Practices in Place

The following Initiatives received ratings of Problematic Implementation and/or Performance Goals Not Reached:

- *Initiative 4.1: A collaborative working group of school committee, administrators and teachers will be established, agree on goals and create an educator evaluation tool based on updated regulations to ensure educator performance is based on their impact on student outcomes:* Problematic Implementation and Partially Reached Performance Goals
- *Initiative 4.3: Staff will receive professional development improving their understanding of the new evaluation tool and the new educator evaluation standards:* Problematic Implementation and Performance Goals Not Reached

In the first year of the Accelerated Improvement Plan process, the Gill-Montague Regional 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.

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.*

Overall, levels of student proficiency and student growth between 2011 and 2012 were mixed. See Tables 1 and 2. The Composite Performance Index (CPI), which measures proficiency, remained flat in ELA (with a 0.3 CPI change) and in math (with a -1.9 CPI change). The median SGP, which measures student growth, remained virtually unchanged in ELA (with a 0.5 change in SGP), but decreased in math (with a -9.5 change in SGP). The same pattern was seen in the ELA performance of the “high needs” subgroup (59% of Gill-Montague’s 1,023 students). Overall proficiency for high needs students remained flat in ELA (with a 1.0 CPI change), and growth in ELA was also essentially unchanged (with a 3.0 change in SGP) for the high needs subgroup. However, the level of proficiency in math decreased (with a -3.3 CPI change) and there was a decrease in growth in math (with a -12.0 change in SGP) for the high needs subgroup. Although the Gill-Montague Regional School District achieved little 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 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	83.5	75.8	87.2	79.9	2011	77.4	69.3	77.0	67.1
2012	83.8	73.9	86.7	79.9	2012	78.4	66.0	76.5	67.0
Change	0.3	-1.9	-0.5	0.0	Change	1.0	-3.3	-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	44.5	55.5	50.0	50.0	2011	41.0	56.0	46.0	46.0
2012	45.0	46.0	50.0	50.0	2012	44.0	44.0	46.0	46.0
Change	0.5	-9.5	0.0	0.0	Change	3.0	-12.0	0.0	0.0

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.

Ongoing Work

The new superintendent started his work in Gill-Montague on 7/1/2012. He reports that numerous trainings took place for both teachers and administrators during the summer. DSAC staff trained 20 K-12 teachers on tiered instruction. This group included support staff and some administrators. A three-day training was provided on the implementation of eSped, which included additional specialized modules. Additional training was held on Tools of the Mind (an early childhood program) for those teachers not previously trained. The superintendent provided training on the new Educator Evaluation system for administrators on August 15 and 16. Administrators trained teachers on system rubrics on the morning of August 27th. On August 28th, training on differentiated instruction was provided for all staff.

Summary and Recommendations

- The new interim superintendent must develop a clearly articulated plan to build a strong leadership team. Given changes in building level administrators, he must develop a system of consistent and targeted mentoring for them focused on classroom observations and feedback to teachers.
- Results of interim assessment data must be used to identify weaknesses in instruction and/or curriculum; mid-course corrections must be made, and support and oversight must be provided to staff charged with this work at both the classroom and leadership levels.
- Response to Intervention must be implemented consistently, including frequent classroom observations and feedback to teachers and principals.
- Targeted work in mathematics, particularly at the middle and high school level, needs to be planned and implemented.
- Learning Walkthroughs should take place with consistency across all grades and all schools.
- Additional training should be provided in the new system of Educator Evaluation for both teachers and administrators, with attention paid to the alignment of the goals of all educators with those of the Accelerated Improvement Plan.