



Organizational Assessment Update from Superintendent Jim Schlachter

In May, a team of experts conducted an organizational assessment of the school district. Over the course of a week, the team interviewed 319 staff, students, and community members. They also reviewed hundreds of school district documents.

The information gathered from the assessment promises to be a valuable resource as we work to improve our district. The assessment focused on seven key areas. The district has numerous strengths and opportunities for improvement. The areas identified as “Strengths” highlight where we are moving in the right direction. The “Opportunities for Improvement” are areas where we would see a significant benefit if we are able to make adjustments that impact these areas.

The assessment identified four key district strengths. First, students who participated in focus groups identified their schools as inclusive and nurturing. Another district strength—our staff members, who were described in focus groups as talented, dedicated, committed, and passionate. Third, there is strong external stakeholder loyalty to the district. All participants expressed a great deal of pride in their schools and the district. And finally, students have remained the focus of conversations even in difficult financial times.

The assessment also highlighted opportunities for improvement. While the district has a set of focused strategic initiatives, not all staff members are aware of what they are or understand their roles in them. Even though the district and its schools have access to a variety of data, it is not being consistently used to change instructional practices. While the district has effective communication mechanisms, stakeholders are unsure of what happens with their input.

This grant-funded study is the first of three annual assessments that will provide ongoing data for our improvement efforts. Below you will find the results of the study in the seven areas.

Thanks to all who participated in this assessment. Without you, this organizational assessment would not have been possible.

Jim Schlachter
Superintendent of Schools

2013-14 Organizational Assessment Results

LEADERSHIP
<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Board and Superintendent share a common vision and have a cohesive working relationship • A variety of stakeholders feel district office leadership is accessible and approachable • Most staff feel they have the support they need to be successful in their individual jobs
<p>Opportunities for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the district has a vision, most staff members are unclear as to what it is and can't link their work to it • There is a perception across the district that "it is being done to us instead of with us"
STRATEGIC PLANNING & RESULTS
<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some staff have individual goals that link to the district's strategic initiatives • The district has a communication plan that is aligned to the district's strategic initiatives
<p>Opportunities for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the district has developed focused strategic initiatives, not all internal stakeholders know what they are and/or understand their role in them • While School Improvement Plans exist, not all staff know what's in them or how their schools are using them
CURRICULUM & TEACHING
<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district's focus on providing differentiated educational opportunities for the students remains strong in spite of budget reductions • The school climate is inclusive and nurturing for students
<p>Opportunities for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While work has been done to align curriculum K-12 to the common core standards, staff feels overwhelmed and under-resourced to successfully implement the instructional change • Not all staff feel there is cohesiveness between general education and special education • While data teams are being used across the district, not all employees value the process and/or the outcomes • Not all district provided professional development is valued by all staff
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT
<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The district is proactive in engaging external stakeholders in a variety of ways • There is a strong external stakeholder loyalty to the district • The district has been intentional about including leadership from their contractors (Transportation and Nutrition Services) in district conversations and planning

<p>Opportunities for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the district has several effective mechanisms to communicate, not all internal stakeholders feel the information is prioritized or timely • Stakeholders are unsure of what happens with their input
<p>STELLAR PEOPLE</p>
<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talented, dedicated, committed, passionate staff is a strength and asset of the district • There is a lot of pride among staff, students, and community
<p>Opportunities for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the reduction in staff and increased workload, staff feels overwhelmed and underappreciated • The evaluation process is inconsistent and not valued by all staff • While various supervisors recognize and show appreciation for individuals' efforts on an informal basis, the district does not provide enough regular opportunities for employee recognitions and celebrations • While staff is encouraged to participate in external professional development, there is no expectation to share learnings
<p>EFFECTIVE & EFFICIENT PROCESSES</p>
<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students have remained the focus of conversations even in difficult financial times • The district is transparent about the budgeting process
<p>Opportunities for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a lack of understanding with some internal stakeholders around work flow and standard operating procedures
<p>ACCOUNTABILITY</p>
<p>Strengths:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of data resources exist • Some operational data is being used for continuous improvements
<p>Opportunities for Improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While data is being collected, it is not being consistently used to change instructional practices

Next Steps

District leaders are exploring the findings and will be applying what we learn in a strategic manner. Not all aspects can be addressed immediately; however, we can make changes in areas where we have the capacity to sustain improvement efforts. After we analyze the data and identify related improvements, you can expect updates on the changes we make.

In the fall of 2014, a report on areas of change will be made to the school board, staff, and community. Next spring we will again participate in the assessment and measure the data collected in the 2014-15 school year against the 2013-14 data.