

A BETTER LEARNING EXPERIENCE

A Plan for Implementing an Effective School Improvement Process in the
Williamson Central School District

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INTRODUCTION

Emerging research and literature suggest that there are certain educational practices that work better than others. For a District to be effective, it must utilize those practices judged to be effective and discard those judged to be ineffective. The District sees the Effective Schools Program as a process for coordinating the variety of excellent educational practices currently existing in the District under a common plan, guided by a clearly stated mission. This process requires cooperation and commitment on the part of administrators, teachers, parents and other personnel.

This plan identifies the District's process for school improvement and demonstrates how the District intends to work with existing structures, building committees, and leadership planning teams.

LEADERSHIP PLANNING TEAM

A District Leadership Planning Team will be formulated for the purpose of monitoring the overall work of the individual Building Planning Teams and the general implementation of the Action Plans. Membership to the District Planning Team will include representatives from all components of the School District: administration, professional staff, instructional support staff, parents and students. Building representatives (i.e. faculty representatives, administrative representatives, instructional support staff representatives, and parent reps) will gain membership (for a 2 year term) to the district Planning Team when a member's term of office expires or the person resigns from the team. The building representatives to the District team do not all have to be members of their respective building teams. Non-building representatives (i.e. Central Office; WFA; PTSA) will be appointed by their represented group.

Membership to the District Planning Team will include:

- 1 Administrator per building
- 1 or 2 Teacher representatives per building
- 1 Classified staff per building
- 1 Parent representataive per building
- 1 District Office representative
- 1 WFA representative
- 1 PTSA representative (appointed by PTSA Executive Board)

As reorganization in the District occurs, building membership positions to the District Planning Team will be modified.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to provide a learning community that inspires character, service, knowledge and wisdom.

VISION

Active learning in a supportive and respectful environment.

BELIEFS

We Believe...

all children can learn.

all children will reach their highest potential.

we must educate the whole child.

communication is the single most important skill.

the education of a child requires the active involvement of the entire community.

all members of our community serve as role models for our children.

all community members have a voice in decision-making.

our buildings belong to the community and will serve as places for life-long learning.

in supporting each other.

that laughter and joy are a part of learning.

PROJECT GOALS

The primary goal for each building in the Williamson Central School District is that the instructional program will be effective.

Effective is defined as:

- A. Levels of proficiency will increase by 10% per year until ninety percent, or greater, is achieved as we implement Common Core.
- B. There will be no significant difference in the proportion of students demonstrating minimum academic mastery as a function of socio-economic status, gender, placement in special education programs, ethnicity and English Language Learner (ELL) status.

Should a building not meet the criteria of the Primary Goal (above) and implementing Definitions and Standards (below), the following definition of school improvement will be used until the building attains effectiveness:

- A. There will be an annual increase in the proportion of students who demonstrate minimum academic mastery, and
- B. There will be an annual decrease in the proportion of students demonstrating minimum academic mastery as a function of socio-economic status, gender, placement in special education programs, ethnicity and English Language Learner (ELL) status.

DEFINITIONS

- A. Minimum Academic Mastery — A minimum score on a standardized, normed criterion referenced or State exam which indicates that a student will be predictably successful in the next grade or subject level in this or any other school district.
- B. Socio-economic Status — A statement of status based upon free or reduced lunch status.

STANDARDS FOR MONITORING

A. The specific tests to be used and the minimum score for each are listed below:

1. For Grade 1-4:
 - a. State Test in Grade 3 & 4 ELA & Math, Level 3 and above.
 - b. K-2 – Third party assessment from state approved list.
 - c. MAP results for Grade 3 & 4 (ELA, Math)
2. For Grades 5-8:
 - a. State Test in Grade 5, 6, 7 and 8 ELA and Math, Level 3 and above.
 - b. MAP results for grades 5-8 (ELA, Math)
3. For Grades 9-12
 - a. Graduation rates
 - b. Students at 65% and above on 5 Regents examinations required for a Regents diploma
 - c. MAP results for Grade 9-10 (ELA, Math)

B. The following standards will also apply:

1. The District will monitor various indicators to see if the number of students demonstrating outstanding achievement (Level 4 and 85 percent or above on the Regents) is maintained/improved.
2. There will be an annual increase in the percentage of students earning an advanced Regents diploma.
3. Percentage of students in each grade level 9-12 taking college level courses will be maintained or improved.

ASSUMPTIONS

In order for Williamson students to be successful, these assumptions need to be identified and accepted as a formal part of this project. We present the following assumptions:

1. All students can learn.
2. This project affects all school personnel.
3. Although families can enhance student achievement, schools can and should work to enable all students, regardless of their familial background, to acquire basic school skills.
4. Annually the goal of education for each student is to attain at least the standard of minimum academic performance to allow success in the next grade level. Further, the goal of education is to prepare students so that they can make as many choices as possible. Thus, upon graduation from high school, all students should be able, as a result of their education, to choose whether or not to enter college, or to attend another form of post high school education, or to join the military, or to obtain a job.
5. There is a positive correlation between academic student achievement and staff expectations.
6. An emphasis upon learning and academic achievement is the prime purpose of public education.
7. Teachers and principals can and do make a difference in the quality of education each child receives.
8. A school building is a complex social system with a set of norms, beliefs and patterns of behavior which can facilitate or hinder learning.

9. Collaborative, cooperative, collegial, supportive, noncoercive planning, especially at the building level and accompanied by support from District Office personnel, is the key approach to improvement.
10. The Building Principal has a key role in establishing the climate of his or her building.
11. Change is a process, a series of related events. It is not one event.
12. Ideal change fosters ownership and commitment by all participants. Teachers have the opportunity to exercise influence and see plans for change as consistent with the goal of this project.
13. In many ways, the schools in this district are effective. The challenge is to make them more effective.
14. Because the climate of a school is dependent upon all of its occupants, the individual building as a whole is the strategic unit for planned change. To obtain change, attention must be paid to the culture of the building.
15. Focusing on effective schools research will necessitate realignment of other priorities within the building.
16. The Board of Education gives support in a practical and cooperative manner.
17. This project affects all school personnel.

CHANGE MODEL

So that each building can efficiently and effectively study itself, and, if needed, make appropriate changes we present the following model:

A. Building Needs Assessment

1. Achievement Profile

A disaggregated analysis will be done for each subject identified in "Standards for Monitoring". A disaggregated analysis is a comparison of the percent of students from the lower socio-economic status compared to the percent of students from the middle and upper socio-economic status who score at or below the minimum standard for academic mastery. A disaggregated analysis of gender, special education, ethnicity and English Language Learner (ELL) status will also be done.

2. District Profile

A survey will be administrated annually with district (UPK-12) staff. Members for these groups will be open to instructional staff who are WFA members. In addition, parents will be surveyed annually. Students will be surveyed in grade 12 in 2015 and a new group selected for 2016.

3. Building Profile

Building planning teams may choose to develop focus group questions and conduct building level focus groups for their instructional staff.

B. Building Planning Committee

1. Every year the membership to the Building Planning Team will be open to interested building staff and parent members of the PTSA. If warranted,

there will be an election. The term will start with the summer planning session and end at the close of the school year. The election of the Building Planning Committee will be initiated by the Building Principal. It will consist of up to 12 voting members defined as follows:

UPK-4 Six teacher representatives (preferably one from each grade level); a teacher representative of the WFA; the building principal; 1 full-time support staff; and 1 or 2 parent members appointed by PTSA.

5-8 Six teacher representatives (preferably one from each grade level); a teacher representative of the WFA; the building principal; 1 full-time support staff; and 1 or 2 parent members appointed by PTSA.

9-12 Five teacher representatives (preferably the department heads); a teacher representative of WFA; the building principal; 1 support staff; and 1 or 2 parent members appointed by PTSA.

Additional non-voting members may attend meetings and have input into the process.

2. The functions of the Building Planning Committee will be:
 - a. To develop a plan for the building based upon student academic achievement. This plan will emphasize strengths and areas in need of improvement.

- b. If non-academic issues arise, the BPT in the building will establish a separate committee to address the issue(s) (e.g. Climate/Culture Committee).
- c. To identify and agree upon the most important strengths, needs, and subsequent objectives. This will be based on an analysis of the degree to which the correlates of an effective school exist and on the disaggregated analysis for that building.
- d. To develop an appropriate written plan of action for the school year unique to the building needs. This plan will be based upon programs and/or practices which current research/literature has shown to be effective; namely, they produce increases in student achievement.
- e. To seek support, consulting assistance, specific journals, model and examples of strategies which work.
- f. Building plans will be shared in September or October with building staff and PTSA.
- g. To establish specific vehicles for both formal and informal ongoing communications (i.e. reports at PTSA meetings, reports sent via Building and District news) with the staff and parents so that its deliberations are open.
- h. To establish regular opportunities for all parties to give input and review throughout the school year.

- i. To meet periodically throughout the year to monitor and to facilitate the implementation of the plan and to share progress with staff and parents as needed.

C. Building Plan

1. Procedure for development and approval:

- a. Each Building Planning Committee will meet during the summer and develop a prioritized draft plan to present to the staff and PTSA upon the opening of school.
- b. Upon completion of the draft plan, it will be sent to district office for review.
- c. All support staff members and members identified under WFA contract, as well as parent representatives to building planning teams who have been appointed by the PTSA, will officially vote on each building plan each year. A poll list which includes all eligible voters will be verified by the Building Planning Team before the vote. The voting will be held prior to October 15th. The Building staff will vote by paper ballot in their respective buildings. Staff working in more than one building will be eligible to vote on plans in each of their buildings. All employees will be invited to an informational meeting prior to the vote.
- d. Any plan that is voted down (not approved by a majority) needs to go back to the Building Planning Team for revision and revote.

2. Building Planning Teams may agree to work in conjunction with one another on the same issue(s).

D. Implementation of the Plan

The plan will be implemented by completing the action steps outlined in each plan.

E. Annual Evaluation

This will consist of the computation of new disaggregated analysis of academic achievement, and other appropriate activities. The Building Planning Team will develop a written evaluation report identifying needs, strengths, and areas of improvement. This evaluation report will be shared with the staff, administration, superintendent, Board of Education and parents at a PTSA Meeting at the building level.

F. The Next Year

Using the Annual Evaluation Report, the Building Planning Committee will develop a plan of action for the coming year using the same procedures and processes as it used for the current year.

G. Settling Disputes

Disputes related to Building Action Plans may arise at the local building level or plan(s) may fail after revision(s). If this happens, the issue will be submitted in writing to the Building Planning Team (BPT) by the representatives of the group originating the issue. The BPT will discuss the dispute complaint, reach consensus and report the findings back to the entire staff. If consensus cannot be reached at the building level, the BPT will forward the problem/issue to the District Planning Team (DPT). The Team will discuss the issue and brainstorm possible solutions. These will be sent back to the BPT for

consideration and decision, which will be reported to the entire staff. If still no consensus decision can be reached by the BPT the issue will be presented to a panel¹ representing each of the shareholder groups from the DPT teachers, administrators, instructional support staff, parent and students (when appropriate), who will hear the dispute and reach a decision either by consensus or a majority vote if necessary. This decision will be communicated in writing to the BPT as the resolution of the dispute.

¹ NOTE: The panel will be comprised of one representative from each of the participating groups on the DPT or from their membership. No panel member will be selected from the building originating the issue.

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF THE DISTRICT MASTER PLAN

1. This plan was originally approved in 1987. The plan is under constant review and is changed periodically to meet the changing educational needs of our school. Any proposed changes will be sent from the District Planning Team (DPT) to staff, administration, Superintendent, Board of Education and Building PTSA Groups for review and comments.
2. The District Leadership Planning Team will then meet again to finalize the plan.
3. The plan will be shared with the staff, administration superintendent and PTSA. The Board of Education will review and approve the plan.
4. If there is an identified need recognized by a Building Planning Team, or Superintendent, or Board of Education, then the District Planning Team will reconvene.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Experience has shown that for a school improvement program to be effective, there needs to be a blend of central office direction, structure and building level autonomy. Building committees need to have ownership if the process is to be effective. As a result, this plan sets forth areas where district initiative will be maintained and it defines where building initiative and leadership will occur.

The District has prided itself on the comprehensive nature of its program offerings and services. Programs like special education and vocational education serve a variety of student needs. It is the intent of the District to continue to address the needs of special populations of students through the school improvement process.

It is the intent of the District to build upon the current structure while focusing upon the theme that "things can be better". A significant feature of this plan will be an assessment of current conditions with specific attention being given to how the district can improve upon what it perceives as its strengths while addressing its weaknesses.

In committing to school improvement, the District will provide funding for each Building team to meet during the summer and as necessary throughout the year. Necessary resources will be provided so that Buildings can implement their action plans.