

**Rogers Public Schools
Strategic Plan
Executive Summary
2011-12**

This completes our sixth year of the continuous improvement process supported by our Strategic Plan. As in years past, objectives are established in the summer and organized into the five domains; leadership, data, curriculum and instruction, communication and professional development. Forty objectives were identified for the 2011-12 school year and organized by domain. Each objective is then assigned to a person or persons to be responsible, a timeline, measurement or evidence and the actions to be taken to accomplish the objective. The Strategic Plan serves as our accountability instrument and ensures that our commitment to continuous improvement is not theory but practice.

Leadership

The Leadership Domain is comprised of two major elements. First to design and maintain an infrastructure that will facilitate student achievement. Secondly to identify opportunities and strategies to resolve challenges in our district

The first component includes district processes and procedures all ready in place i.e. leadership cabinet, systematic policy reviews and updates, directors' meetings and reports, assistant principal and principal meetings and various reports to the board.. These regularly scheduled meetings and reports are conduits for information, sharing new ideas, providing feedback and decision-making. These meetings are important for district communication and management. Every meeting has an agenda and is followed by published notes. This provides accountability and institutional memory for the district.

The second element of the leadership domain is derived from our curriculum audit, state and local data and input from stakeholders. For example, student achievement for special education students and English language learners has been addressed each year and intervention programs are monitored to mark progress. A systematic review of school board policies is also an annual action step. Other action steps emerge throughout the year, such as creating a district technology conference, preparing for Common Core curriculum, and participating state initiatives and trainings.

The Human Resource department has re-evaluated procedures this year for recruiting new staff and supporting existing employees. The transfer process was streamlined for our employees. Methods to support and retain new employees were investigated. The results of that investigation indicate a need to personalize orientation for new employees and several new processes will be assimilated into this process in the fall of 2012. Recruitment of candidates for teaching positions was also refined. Instead of a large annual job fair, we implemented a smaller more selective process to help principals identify quality candidates by using a combination of a paper screening and an interview rating system. This produced a smaller but richer candidate pool for our district. This year we were represented by Dr. Hill and a minority teacher on targeted recruiting trips to optimize our opportunities to draw quality minority teachers.

Data

Rogers, like all school districts is receiving data continuously from a variety of sources; test scores, grades, attendance, mobility, discipline, demographics, and enrollment. Data allows teachers and administrators to monitor student progress and when necessary individualize instruction to meet the needs of all learners. In 2011-12, we provided each teacher with a tool to access to this data in one location. Teachers can now access information on individual students and administrators can group and regroup students to evaluate programs, customize instruction and respond to individual student needs.

Data can be the fuel for district changes. Since the inception of the Leadership Cabinet, regular reports on a wide range of topics are scheduled. These include such topics as graduation rates, semester grade point averages, attendance, Advance Placement exams, longitudinal post secondary enrollment and performance of subgroups of students on a variety of tests. This data is used as evidence to guide decisions and establish procedures to improve student achievement at all levels. Data reports also serve as accountability processes to insure consistent regular monitoring of the progress made to the objectives established in the Strategic Plan.

Data is also a part of the building school improvement process. Each building presents achievement data to their respective assistant superintendent twice a year. These data meetings serve two basic purposes. First they monitor student progress toward achieving proficiency on state benchmark exams. Secondly they provide an opportunity for feedback on programming in each building and a forum to suggest changes in implementation or reallocation of resources. This process has been in place for several years and allows us to respond to any concerns or barriers to student achievement at the building level.

Curriculum and Instruction

The domain of Curriculum and Instruction may have been the busiest aspect of our Strategic Plan in Year Six. The implementation of the Common Core curriculum has taxed our curriculum support staff K-12. This year Common Core Standards were implemented in kindergarten through second grade after much preparation. The remaining grades will convert to Common Core over the next two years. While these new standards have changed the learning expectations for our students, generally they will result in a deeper understanding in the content that is taught. Since these standards will be shared by forty-eight other states, this will allow us to measure our performance to students across the nation.

Much work has been done to “unpack” these standards this year. Taking a learning standard and translating that into a classroom objective is time intensive work. Once the standard is translated into what the student is expected to learn, the instructional strategy and materials must be selected. The standards must also be sequenced in such a manner as to present learning in a logical developmentally appropriate unit. Each unit must build upon the previous unit of study. To accomplish this task, many of our teachers and academic facilitators have spent hours researching other state and district’s work. We have also enlisted the help of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). The SREB has worked with our high school teachers to prepare for Common Core Standards. These resources are being compiled to best prepare our district for the transition to Common Core Standards at the secondary level.

We have completed our second year of work with Dr. Pollock. This year the focus was on preparing assistant principals and more classroom teachers on effective instructional strategies. This has been a critical element in our action plan, to use “best instructional practices”. Dr. Pollock’s work is based upon

nine high yield instructional strategies that have the greatest impact on student learning. She also promotes a lesson format that engages students in their learning, **GANAG** (**G** = goal setting for the learners, **A** = accessing prior knowledge, **N** = acquiring new knowledge, **A** = applying new knowledge, and **G** = generalizing or summarizing the knowledge learned). These strategies and the elements of a GANAG lesson format will become part of the culture of instruction in our district. After three years, the expectation in our classrooms will be to use these researched-based strategies to maximize student learning. This expectation was communicated to building leaders during Year Six to prepare for a full implementation by the fall of 2013.

There are other instructional elements at work in our district which we have initiated over the past few years. These initiatives will continue to be supported and can be assimilated into the GANAG format. Examples of such efforts are Cognitively Guided Instruction and Thinking Mathematically. These strategies for teaching math focus on student learning and the student articulation of mathematical logic. A second effort is Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol or SIOP. SIOP training has been in our district for several years and identifies strategies to improve student achievement for our English Language Learners. A third effort that has been ongoing is known as co-teaching. This staffing technique places special education and/or English Language Learners in a regular classroom with the regular education teacher and their assigned specialty teacher. Both teachers assume responsibility for all students in the classroom providing exposure to subgroups of students to the expected curriculum while providing expert support.

Professional Development

Professional Development goes hand in glove with Curriculum and Instruction. In Year Six, professional development was highlighted by instructional trainings with Dr. Pollock. During the 2011-12 school year, Dr. Pollock spent 20 days in our district and worked with a total of 217 staff members. This brought the total number of trained certified staff to 439 with another 120 staff members scheduled for the 2012-13 school year. We intend to make Dr. Pollock's concepts the standard for instruction in our district.

Instructional professional development was also tailored for content areas. The Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) selected Rogers as one of the pilot districts for secondary teachers. This organization has provided training on new approaches to math and literacy at the high school level, such as the use of long term tasks to measure student understanding through interdisciplinary units. Other instructional methodologies were continued this year as more teachers were trained in Cognitively Guided instruction and Thinking Mathematically unique approaches to teaching math through careful questioning techniques.

The second component of the Leadership Domain is the development of our district leaders. This includes not only administrators, but our facilitators, teachers, directors and other staff. Over the past few years we have invested time and resources to secure that the culture of continuous improvement, ethical decision-making, the use of data and a focus on improving student achievement survives any person or position. Since the inception of the Strategic Plan we have had our own Leadership Academy. Beginning in May of 2011, we expanded leadership development to include serves offered by the Soderquist Center for Ethics and Leadership Development. With the help of the Soderquist Center, we have reaffirmed our mission, vision and values, trained 15 certified employees who are potential leaders and had administrators participate in a team-forming training. We have also used the Arkansas Leadership Academy to enhance the skills of sitting principals. Mr. Moore and Mr. White were in year

two of the program. Principals Cindy Viala, Sharla Osbourn and Mary Elmore have completed year three. These extensive leadership trainings support our initiative to develop a “school system instead of a system of schools” by building communication systems, common expectations and removing barriers inherent to a district with numerous buildings and multiple levels.

Much of our professional development is of a more practical nature. Each Smart Board installed in our district required hours of training for the teacher. Technology training continued throughout the year to support new technologies and software. The plethora of educational software has led to the establishment of a Technology Conference for our staff. This will be an opportunity for teachers to share instructional software and hardware with each other. This is scheduled for the second week of August. Administrative teams were also trained in the use of the FileMaker Pro database to enhance their ability to track and manipulate student data.

Staff also attended professional development outside our district. Whenever this occurs, we have participants report to leadership cabinet to share their learning. These reports included; leadership projects from the Master Principals program, Technology Center for Administrative Leadership conference in Little Rock, Link Crew training in Colorado, “Where Everyone Belong’s” training in Chicago,, the State and National conference for the Association of Secondary School Administrators, Differentiating Instruction Conference, National Middle School conference, National Public Relations Conference, and numerous trainings on Common Core Curriculum at our Coop and in Little Rock.

Communication

Good communication is vital to the health of any organization. We have created an infrastructure and procedures to maximize communication in our district. Internally, we publish notes and minutes for each and every administrative meeting in the district. We have expanded the use of school fusion to schools and organizations to keep interested stakeholders apprised of changes, schedules, and important information. Many schools have embraced social networking through Facebook.

We have employed some new technologies this year to provide better service to our parents. The automated notification system has been used this to notify parents and students about special upcoming events or important deadlines. Our Meal Pay Plus program has allowed parents to manage lunch accounts and other school related charges. We have continued to use DVD's as a method of orientating incoming kindergarten students and ESOL families to the Rogers Public schools. As part of kindergarten registration this year, each parent was required to participate in a training to familiarize them with the expectations and skills necessary to be successful in Rogers Public Schools.

Communication begins at the front desk and on the school bus. To improve every student and parent experience, we conducted an in-service for school secretaries and bus drivers on customer service. The training was titled “Give ‘em the Pickle” and focused on building relationships with school patrons. The training was conducted in the fall and winter of 2012.

Strategic Plan Year Seven

Several initiatives have emerged during this year that will become objectives in 2012-13. Our commitment to our action plan, *“a well-defined curriculum, delivered with best instructional practices and supported by professional development”*, will continue to be a driving force. We will develop

objectives around the work of Dr. Pollock. This job embedded professional development is focused on improving instruction. This is the third year of this professional development. At the end of next year we will have trained over 500 administrators, and teachers on how to focus on student learning, identify the essential elements of lesson planning, and most importantly when and how use nine high yield strategies in their instruction. We have challenged our administrators to become instructional leaders. Principals will complete the training in 2012-13. They are to become well-versed in these concepts and will be expected to able to effectively support instruction in their buildings. Another expectation is to develop a system to sustain the work of Dr. Pollock in our building. We believe that there is sufficient staff and administrators in each building to equip those teachers that are new to our district and those teachers that have not had the opportunity to work with Dr. Pollock. Our goal is for this to become the instructional culture for Rogers Public Schools.

As our district has grown, we continue to look for opportunities to improve other aspects of our culture. Generally, we are looking for ways to make our schools feel smaller and our processes to be more personal. This began with the establishment of academies in our high schools and last year's Link Crew program. Next year we will be looking at ways to improve the acculturation of employees new to our district. With our buyout, we had the opportunity to hire several new staff giving us an opportunity to collect valuable input. This year, as part of a leadership academy project, we surveyed and then spoke to several of those new hires about their experience. The information gathered was insightful and provided some direction on ways to improve new teacher orientation at the district and building levels. We shared this information at our end of the year meeting with administrators and will make this an objective in 2012-13.

Providing a seamless experience for our students will continue to be a principle we will use in several aspects next year. Common Core curriculum will need to be well-articulated. This will give us a platform to work on vertical alignment of what students learn, each year building upon the next. We will continue to look for ways to remove any barriers to the student learning in our district by personalizing education whenever possible and transitioning students through each level, whether those barriers are academic or behavioral. An example of this effort is the summer reading program available to every elementary student in our district with the exception of those attending Bellview. This program is also supported by parent training.

There are several events which we will face in the next school year. While it is difficult to anticipate, the present accountability system for our district may be changing in the next year. Arkansas has applied for a waiver for some of the rules that are used to determine adequate yearly progress. How will this impact our schools and allocation of federal resources? There are also some big questions around the role of technology. Will the Common Core curriculum lead us towards electronic resources and away from textbooks? Will the future assessments be computer-based? How will we adjust and incorporate student owned devices into the classroom? How will we manage the growing need for internet access? Other issues we will face include opening a new elementary school and subsequent boundary changes, opening and staffing a new tech high school, and preparing certified staff for the state's new evaluation system.

While all of these challenges and opportunities are not unique to Rogers, we feel that our district is nimble and flexible enough to deal with these questions. While the Strategic Plan does not provide the answers or set the direction for our district, it does provide a framework in which to take challenges and create opportunities as we move toward our seventh year.