



# STATE OF IOWA

CHESTER J. CULVER, GOVERNOR  
PATTY JUDGE, LT. GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
JUDY A. JEFFREY, DIRECTOR

January 28, 2007

Steve Smith, Superintendent  
Guthrie Center Community School District  
906 School Street  
Guthrie Center, Iowa 50115

Dear Superintendent Smith:

Attached is the report of findings from the Comprehensive School Improvement Site Visit held at Guthrie Center Community School District on December 12, 13, and 14, 2007. The report is based upon interviews conducted with administrators, teaching and support staff, parents, students, school improvement advisory, and school board members, as well as a review of district documents.

The site visit was designed to assess progress with the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP), provide a general assessment of educational practices within the district, make recommendations for improvement, and determine compliance with accreditation standards and federal program requirements. The report reflects consensus of the following team members:

**Department of Education Representatives**

Colleen Anderson, Assessment Consultant  
Tom Andersen, School Improvement and Equity Consultant  
Mary Beth Schroeder-Fracek, Teacher Quality Administrative Consultant  
Steve Maurer, Special Education Consultant  
Julie Melcher, School Improvement Consultant  
Gary Schwartz, School Construction Consultant  
Mary Sullivan, Assessment and Evaluation Consultant

**Area Education Agency Representatives**

Darcy Cosens, Partnership Director  
Misty Christensen, Program Assistant

**Local Education Agency Representatives**

Lisa Hagemeyer-Lasseigne, Director of Student Services, Harlan CSD  
Susie Olesen, School Improvement Consultant, Iowa Association of School Boards  
John Speer, Superintendent, Ballard CSD  
Lora Wunsch, Director of Curriculum and Student Services, Saydel CSD

It is our hope that this report will provide guidance to enhance student achievement in your district and support continuing conversation among staff and community members about the local education system, how and what students are learning, and how *more* students can learn at higher levels.

If areas of noncompliance were identified, the district must submit a plan of correction and/or evidence that corrections have already been completed. These should be submitted to the team leader within 45 business days from receipt of this letter. If a plan of correction is submitted,

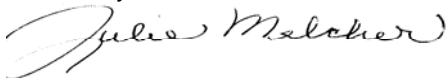
include the actions the district intends to take and the anticipated timeline for completion of these actions (see final pages of this report). Once received, the team leader will evaluate the district's plan and evidence and provide feedback.

As part of the district's continuous improvement process, it must review its current CSIP and provide revisions as needed. These revisions should be based on district needs assessments (including the attached report), student achievement data, stakeholder input, and established priorities. Recertification of the CSIP must be completed by **September 15, 2008**. The directions for revision and submission of the CSIP can be found at <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/blogcategory/61/897/>.

As part of the Department's efforts to continuously improve the Comprehensive School Improvement Site Visit process, we ask that you provide us with feedback based on your visit experience. A short online survey has been developed and posted at the following site <http://tp2.aea11.k12.ia.us/004/leasvsd.tp4>. Please click on the link to complete the survey. It will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your responses are confidential and shared only in aggregate form to members of the Department's School Improvement Team.

The visiting team again extends its gratitude to you and the district's staff and patrons in preparing for and showing courtesy during the visit. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,



Julie Melcher  
School Improvement Consultant  
Division of PK-12 Education  
Iowa Department of Education



Del Hoover  
Deputy Division Administrator  
Division of PK-12 Education  
Iowa Department of Education

cc:                   Site Visit Team Members  
                      School Board President  
                      Iowa Department of Education Official File  
                      AEA Office

# **Comprehensive Site Visit Iowa Department of Education**



## **Guthrie Center Community School District**

### **Team Findings**

**December 12, 13, and 14, 2007**

Iowa Department of Education  
Grimes State Office Building  
Des Moines, IA 50319-0146

## Vision, Mission, and Goals

The vision, mission, and goals are clearly articulated in the school and community. Stakeholders express an understanding of and share a commitment to the school/district goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability. The vision guides allocations of time and resources.

- Clearly articulated mission established collaboratively with stakeholders
- Vision and mission guide teaching and learning
- Philosophy, beliefs, mission, or vision; major educational needs; and student learning goals based on input from stakeholders and a comprehensive needs assessment (at least every 5 years)
- Staff leadership is encouraged
- Analysis of academic and academic-related data to determine prioritized goals

### Areas of Strength

1. Interviews and observation indicated elementary and secondary teachers and principals, curriculum director, and superintendent are focused on individual student learning goals. The district's mission, philosophy, and belief statements are posted throughout buildings and included in district communications. Parents understood the importance of student credentialing in demonstrating the achievement of student and district goals.
2. Instructional staff and administrators at all levels reported professional development is aligned with building and district goals. Teachers and administrators strive to develop individual students to the best of students' abilities. Examples included the following:
  - A process (credentialing) is in place to prevent students from failing.
  - Staff has been trained in 6+Traits of Writing, Guided Reading, Enhancing Education Through Technology (E2T2), and Read 180.
3. Multiple interview groups reported taking seriously the district belief statement, "We believe a dedicated teacher is one who sincerely cares about students and strives to motivate, educate, and maximize their potential," as they have developed a "caring community" philosophy. Interviewees reported the following examples:
  - Student credentialing
  - Advisor/Advisee
  - Interventions
  - Parent communication
  - Collaborative community relationships (e.g., Head Start and a private preschool, Tiger Tykes, housed at the elementary facility)
4. The district's mission and goals are clearly articulated throughout the school and community. This was evidenced by the support of the school and community of one another, including the following examples:
  - The community provided donations for buildings and grounds improvements such as athletics, district buildings, and technology.
  - The community provides work experience opportunities for students to develop employability skills.

- School staff raised \$25,000 to support the Guthrie County Hospital. A room at the hospital is named in honor of Guthrie Center CSD.
- School and community activities are supported.
- The school uses community facilities such as the library, churches, and aquatics center; the community is able to access school facilities.
- The district and community have worked collaboratively to plan a fine arts festival.

**Suggested Areas of Improvement**

5. The district recently conducted a comprehensive needs assessment. The School Improvement Advisory Committee (SIAC) will be analyzing the data at its next meeting. As the school board and district committees review data and mission and belief statements, the district is encouraged to consider its changing demographics and increased diversity as they go through this process.

## Leadership

Leaders communicate a shared sense of purpose and understanding of the core values. They have a visible presence, provide resources and ensure two-way communication between the educational system and stakeholders. Leaders provide encouragement, recognition, and support for improving student learning. Leadership is committed, persistent, proactive, and distributed through the system.

- Clear expectations for students and staff
- Leadership distributed across central office and schools
- Effective two way communication established by leadership

### **Areas of Strength**

6. School board members and the superintendent act as a collaborative team in leading the district. They listen to one another's ideas, respect opinions, and operate within their role responsibilities while keeping the district's mission and beliefs at the forefront.
7. All interview groups reported evidence of strong administrative leadership at Guthrie Center CSD. The superintendent, curriculum director, and each principal are respected for their daily actions, instructional leadership, accessibility, and approachability. All are visible, involved, concerned, desire and set expectations for improvement, and provide the needed resources to implement district and building initiatives. The administrative team is reported to work well together and has a common focus in meeting student needs.
8. Secondary teachers, administrators, and students indicated student leadership is important. All 8<sup>th</sup> graders receive a full day of leadership training that includes communication, group work, and decision making. Male and female representatives are elected from each advisory group to serve on the Student Council. High school students and staff participated in an August, 2007 leadership workshop conducted by a motivational speaker. High school students are given opportunities to serve in a leadership capacity through fine arts, athletics, student organizations such as Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) and Future Farmers of America (FFA), and in academic settings. Students participate in a student-to-student mentoring program that pairs students based on common interests. Student mentors are trained and serve as positive role models for younger students. Junior high school students have the opportunity to compete in Mock-Trial and other activities.
9. District administrators demonstrate leadership in many ways. Examples included the following:
  - The district was selected to present its advanced student credentialing process at a North Central Association (NCA) national conference.
  - Teachers reported administrators are positive leaders, promote the vision of the school district in all they do, and set clear expectations for staff and students.
10. Teachers and parents reported district administrators are supportive and share leadership. Examples included the following:
  - Open-door policy
  - Visible
  - Problem-solve with teachers

- Develop goals with teachers, rather than directing
  - Accessible to parents
  - Ensure student safety
  - Provide tools teachers need to be successful (e.g., training, materials, etc.)
  - Communicate well with parents and students
  - Know students and families
  - Lead by example
  - Promote shared decision-making
11. Administrators and parents reported they have an active superintendent who believes in promoting a student friendly environment. He leads an advisor/advisee group and parents reported he is doing everything he can for their child.
  12. The curriculum director provides direction and leadership in the areas of curriculum design, implementation, assessment, data collection, professional development, and the school improvement process.
  13. SIAC members reported leadership and responsibility for school improvement efforts are shared and distributed among committee members. Members demonstrated good understanding of the school improvement cycle, including data-based decision making, data mining, goal setting, action planning to meet goals, and the need to monitor progress of the action plan.
  14. SIAC members articulated a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities as active team members. They stated it is their role to understand the school improvement process and to share the efforts of the Guthrie Center CSD with the community at large. It was evident they have an active part in the development of the district's Annual Progress Report (APR). They also stated they help the district keep focused on its goals and review goal progress on a quarterly basis.
  15. The school board sets clear expectations in conjunction with other stakeholders and provides the support to meet goals (e.g., school calendar, monetary resources, etc.)
  16. Teacher leadership is evidenced through Advisor/Advisee, SIAC, serving on the district's Staff Development Committee, and curriculum committees.
  17. K-12 teachers demonstrate leadership in meeting the academic and social/emotional needs of students. Teachers go beyond what would normally be expected. Teachers are motivated to do the right things for students. Additionally, teachers provide funds for field trips, lunch, book bags, and school supplies for students who could not otherwise afford them.

#### **Suggested Areas of Improvement**

18. None noted.

## Collaborative Relationships

Stakeholders express an understanding of, and support the basic mission of the school. Stakeholders have meaningful roles in the decision-making process that promote a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership. They also play *important* roles in helping the school to achieve its mission. Educators in the system develop and nurture a professional culture and collaborative relationships marked by mutual respect and trust inside and outside of the organization. The system works together with balance between district direction and school autonomy.

- Vision established collaboratively with stakeholders (i.e., parents, community, students, and educators)
- Staff members involved in decision-making and activities to achieve the vision
- Parents involved as partners in the educational process
- Decision-making processes and responsibilities defined

### **Areas of Strength**

19. Administrators, general and special education teachers, and parents at all levels reported that teachers are beginning to work collaboratively in order to best meet the needs of all students in the least restrictive environment. Additionally, administrators and teachers reported that collaborative teaching partnerships have allowed students without disabilities to have more individualized assistance, as well as have exposure to a variety of strategies that previously would not have happened. For example, elementary special education teachers reported they work with a general education teacher in a co-teaching model in which “station teaching” (e.g., co-teachers dividing content and students, then teaching the selected content to their students) frequently occurs with all students. The grouping is flexible and all students move in and out of groups according to skills in a fluid manner. Co-teaching is also occurring in a high school English/Language Arts classroom. A consultative model is being used at the junior high school.
20. Multiple interview groups reported two-way communication is a strength of the district. Parents feel comfortable e-mailing, calling, or visiting teachers, administrators, and school board members.
21. Administrators, teachers (general and special education), and parents reported the district’s Advisor/Advisee program supports the achievement of all students and that the program affords the opportunity for each student to have a close relationship with an adult.
22. Student credentialing and the Advisor/Advisee program support the district’s mission. These programs demonstrate the results of collaborative relationships in supporting student learning, as well as the positive culture and climate in the district. The processes used in these programs build relationships, establish student goals, monitor student progress, and provide supports to each student regarding a variety of issues important to the student, parent, and teacher.
23. Multiple interview groups reported the district strives to communicate with parents in a variety of ways. The district wants parents involved in education from PreK to adulthood. Examples included the following:
  - Private preschool and Head Start (on campus)
  - Monthly newsletters
  - Mass e-mails

- Web page
  - Quarterly parent/teacher conferences
  - Student credentialing conferences
  - Contact with parents by teacher and/or advisor
  - Handbooks
  - Wide distribution of the district's Annual Progress Report (APR)
  - District-wide needs assessment
  - Electronic Web-based student information system accessible to parents and students
24. Multiple groups demonstrated use of a common language that filtered down to the student level. Language heard throughout the site visit included the following examples: caring community, extra help, credentialing, co-teaching, and supportive administrators.

### **Suggested Areas of Improvement**

25. Teachers, administrators, and support staff reported the need for time for collaborative planning and professional development to appropriately address the needs of each special education student in the general education setting (general and special education teachers). Co-teaching/collaboration is in its beginning stages at Guthrie Center and the district is commended for its initial steps. As implementation evolves, the district is encouraged to consider the following suggestions:
- Develop a common definition of co-teaching, consultation, collaboration, and coaching. Upon common understanding of the models of co-teaching, select the model most appropriate for each student's needs and provide professional development and follow-up for teachers. Please contact the district's Partnership Director to coordinate assistance from Heartland AEA.
  - Establish policy and procedures to support collaborative teacher planning (perhaps 30-90 minutes a month per team). Approaches could include allocating two half-days scheduled in the summer for paid teacher planning and include this in the special education plan with Heartland AEA. Likewise, planning could be scheduled before or after school with pay or professional development credit. Another option would be for a building to use a substitute teacher to free general and special education teachers for planning during the school day. The district might consider utilizing current district resources, such as paraeducators and tutors with substitute teacher authorization or teacher certification.
  - Define roles and responsibilities for all paraeducators and provide clarity as to appropriate and inappropriate activities for paraeducators within particular models of co-teaching. Review the "Guide to Effective Paraeducator Practices II" from the Iowa Department of Education (DE). This manual was provided to all districts and is available for download on the DE website, <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/773/822>.
  - The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) requires all teachers to be highly qualified. Collaboration is one way to meet that requirement when special education teachers are not licensed in specific content areas, most often at the secondary level. Administrators and teachers are encouraged to continue to move forward in determining which model (co-teaching, consultative teaching, reverse consultation, etc.) is most appropriate for each student and identify

- professional development opportunities for the teachers and administrators involved.
26. Administrators, teachers (general and special education), and parents reported that the Spanish teacher and bi-lingual students are available to district staff and parents when an interpreter is necessary to facilitate communication with non-English/Spanish speaking parents. The district is encouraged to discontinue the use of bi-lingual students in serving as interpreters. Placing students in this position may be in conflict with privacy concerns and puts them in an intermediary position between adults and the school. Consider contacting Heartland AEA's Partnership Director to access interpreters or partnering with nearby school districts.

## Learning Environment

The school climate is conducive to teaching and learning. The environment is safe, orderly, purposeful, and free from threat of physical, social, and emotional harm. Teachers are familiar with students' cultures and know how to work in a multi-cultural setting. Classrooms are integrated with various types of learners (i.e., gender, race, special needs, gifted).

- Materials and resources, including technology available to all students
- Clean, inviting, and welcoming environment
- Staff recognizes visitors in a friendly manner
- Buildings and classrooms accessible to persons with disabilities
- Rules are clearly understood and consistently enforced

### **Areas of Strength**

27. Parents reported hearing quickly from school about their students' academic progress and behavior and have access to student grades and homework assignments via the Internet. Parents reported receiving positive feedback, as well as contacts alerting parents to concerns. The district's student management information system facilitates communication. Parents reported that the school knows when a home does not have Internet and communicates with them by phone or mail.
28. All interview groups commended administrators, teachers, and support staff for maintaining an open and welcoming learning environment. Parents reported when they contact the school with a concern, they receive a prompt response. Teachers reported that administration is accessible and approachable and works to provide the resources needed for student learning. Parents reported that school board members are accessible. Students reported teachers are easily approachable and care about them. Multiple groups reported some teachers post current assignments on the district's website. Interviewees also reported student grades are available through the district's student information system and that the district's monthly newsletter is readily available on the district Web site.
29. Administrators and general and special education teachers reported most students, including students with disabilities, participate in at least one extra/co curricular activity. Examples included FCCLA, FFA, vocal, band, speech, drama, art club, mock trial, and athletics.
30. High school administrators and general education teachers reported effort is put forth to ensure that all students who qualify register for free and/or reduced priced lunch with little stigma related to the support. The high school is committed to ensuring that no student "goes hungry."
31. School board members recognized the strength of the increasing diversity within the community and school district. They acknowledged the economic future of Guthrie Center is dependent upon the diversity of the workforce and the ability of students to work within that context.
32. As evidenced by the district's 2005 Iowa Youth Survey (IYS) and interviews with elementary and junior high parents, students, administrators, and teachers, the school is perceived to be a safe and positive learning environment. Students and

staff felt free from physical threat or harm. Students reported they could go to any adult with concerns. Students are never left alone and are always accompanied by an adult while on the school campus. Students, teachers, and administrators exhibited mutual respect and pride in school. Classrooms are integrated with various types of learners including students with disabilities and gifted students.

33. Multiple groups reported student credentialing and the advisor/advisee process encourages people to have conversations about students that ensure all students will make progress, including the ones that need acceleration and the ones that need interventions. Examples included the following:
- Student needs are identified.
  - Interventions are encouraged and supported.
  - Communication is open.
  - Data are used to make decisions and determine interventions.
  - Families are connected to the schools.
  - Students feel connected to adults.

### **Suggested Areas of Improvement**

34. The district would benefit from developing a plan to accelerate and support the capacity of all staff, school board members, and students to better understand cultural diversity and prepare for a diverse world. Consider the following suggestions:
- Develop the cultural competency and skills of all staff and students. Cultural competency means awareness and understanding of multiple types of diversity beyond religion, low socio-economic status, or rural/urban setting.
  - Develop a broader view of diversity, including a thorough examination of the diversity within the district, such as socio-economic status, location of where people live, families new to the district, gender, race/ethnicity, language, sexual orientation and identity, students who do well and those who do not, and the effect this has on learning.

The district is encouraged to continue its assistance from Heartland AEA and coordinate ongoing technical assistance for developing cultural competency.

35. Secondary parents and students and support staff reported occurrences of bullying and harassment. Parents and students reported that these issues are responded to promptly by the school and that the school district has provided learning opportunities for teachers and students to reduce bullying and harassment. The district is encouraged to continue its commitment to fostering a positive school climate and culture and consider the following:
- Continue to disaggregate Iowa Youth Survey (IYS) data on bullying and harassment and related topics, share these data with the public, and use these data in making revisions in health and guidance curriculum as data indicate.
  - Continue at each level with the structure of class meetings or Advisor/Advisee on a regular basis to provide opportunities for students to dialogue and learn about appropriate behavior and how to deal with bullying and harassment, as well as other issues that emerge from IYS data.
  - Continue and expand training for teachers, students, and parents regarding cyber bullying. Resources such as iSAFE.org and/or wired-safety.org may be helpful.
  - Continue to access and collaborate with regional agencies who have expertise in helping to meet the emotional and social needs of students.

- Visit the Iowa Department of Education Web site and download the Preventing Bullying and Harassment Manual. For information, contact Penny Bisignano ([penny.bisignano@iowa.gov](mailto:penny.bisignano@iowa.gov)), the Iowa Department of Education's coordinator for bullying and harassment prevention, or contact the district's Heartland AEA Partnership Director for information on training opportunities, including the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, a state-wide initiative to prevent bullying and harassment.
36. High school parents and students reported concerns about safety at the secondary facility regarding building access because of multiple unlocked doors, doors on classrooms, and temporary walls. Consider contacting local law enforcement for a safety assessment and recommendations to handle emergency situations. Cyndy Erickson, Consultant, Iowa Department of Education (515-281-3176) would also be able to provide information and resources regarding school safety.
  37. Although the process for reporting incidents of bullying or harassment is included in the student handbooks which are reviewed annually, teachers and administrators at all levels reported they have not received professional development on these topics. In light of recent legislation, a formal process for complaints should be regularly reviewed and shared with parents, staff, and students. All staff should be provided training based on the current legislation and the process for resolving issues. Contact the Heartland AEA's Partnership Director for training materials.

## Curriculum and Instruction

Curriculum challenges each student to excel, reflects a commitment to equity, and demonstrates an appreciation of diversity. There is an emphasis on principles of good instruction and clear expectations for what is taught. Educators have a common understanding of quality teaching and learning. Instruction is designed to accommodate a wide range of learners within the classroom. Teachers have repertoire of effective strategies such as cooperative learning, problem-based learning, comparison and contrast, project based learning, research, use of instructional technology, and use of advance organizers. The staff accepts responsibility for the students' learning of the essential curriculum. Instruction time is allocated to support student learning.

- Students actively engaged
- Varied instructional strategies for diverse learners
- Application to everyday life (relevancy)
- Curriculum and instruction reflect contributions from diverse racial, ethnic, and personal background.

### **Areas of Strength**

38. Secondary general and special education teachers, students, and parents provided examples of how the school integrates career education into the classroom and instruction. Examples included, but were not limited to, job shadowing, work experience, career aptitude testing, field trips, site visits, hospital career day, and resume writing.
39. Parents at all levels reported the district's Web site has information available on the specific content of classes, as well as expectations for student learning. Parents also reported using the district's Web site to monitor their student's grades and homework assignments.
40. Teachers and students at the junior high school reported curriculum is both rigorous and relevant for learners. Parents, students, and teachers stated that all areas in the curriculum are valued such as the emphasis placed on fine arts, as well as core curriculum and exploratories. Students reported their learning day is full of active and engaged learning including plays, group work, and projects.
41. A major focus of instruction is the framework of Differentiated Instruction and the strategies to support this philosophy. Teachers are learning about Differentiated Instruction and ways to support the needs of individual learners in classrooms. Administrators stated that Differentiated Instruction is connected to the student credentialing process, Skills Tutor, and other district initiatives.
42. Students, parents, teachers, and administrators reported the use and amount of technology to support curriculum and instruction. This includes a Web site for online access to student information, ratio of computers to students, classroom resources including LCD's and Elmo's, and Smart Boards. The district has made significant progress in the area of technology since its last accreditation site visit.
43. In the student credentialing process, a part of the criteria for proficiency addresses employability skills. At each level this includes attendance, working well with others,

and work completion (defined differently at each level). Proficiency in these areas contributes toward preparing students to live and work in a diverse world.

#### **Suggested Areas of Improvement**

44. Parents of high school students reported concern about the career information students receive. Parents stated most options for post secondary planning focused on college planning. Parents stated they would appreciate having options for apprentice experiences and visits to or from trade programs be made available. Consider including career pathway information in the secondary course registration handbook.
45. In order to prepare students for a diverse world, curriculum and instruction could more purposefully and systematically reflect contributions from diverse racial, ethnic, and personal backgrounds. While the site visit team found evidence this is occurring, the district could benefit from supportive actions such as the following:
  - During annual curriculum review activities, identify appropriate benchmarks in which to infuse instructional practices and/or content to support diversity.
  - Ensure the review of cultural proficiency materials, books, articles, and other resources continue to be part of the curriculum review process and that curriculum materials are current and plentiful.
  - Intentionally include multi-cultural/gender fair approaches in lesson plans and/or unit plans. This information can be helpful for teachers new to the district as they plan instruction. Support this by setting consistent expectations for documenting this information.
46. Secondary administrators reported the district is considering establishing a block schedule at the junior high school. As the district pursues its exploration, consider the following:
  - How recently has a review of the block schedule at the high school occurred to determine if the schedule has contributed to meeting intended outcomes?
  - Does the block schedule adequately address the required number of minutes in its units of instruction? Would it be helpful to design a school calendar that includes 45 days of instruction in each quarter?
  - How can the schedule be designed at the junior high school to provide an improved connection for students between exploratories and Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs at the high school?
  - Who will be involved in the conversation and decision-making about block scheduling at the junior high school?

## Professional Development

Staff are qualified for assignments and engage in ongoing learning opportunities to improve effectiveness. Student achievement data are used to set goals for professional development. The district uses a framework for professional development that includes theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, and coaching (i.e., Iowa Professional Development Model).

- Focus on instruction and curriculum
- Staff time to collaborate regarding implementation
- Supported by time for effective implementation and evaluation
- Based on analysis of student performance data and review of selection of research based strategies
- Directly connected to instruction and student learning in the context of classrooms
- Formative data to adjust professional development and guide instructional decisions
- Initiatives sustained over time

### **Areas of Strength**

47. Administrators and general and special education teachers reported the district's professional development activities are focused on Differentiated Instruction. This effort supports more individualized and targeted interventions so the needs of all students are met and students can achieve at high levels.
48. The district has established a leadership structure for professional development. The Staff Development Committee meets after each professional development session to review the content that went well at that session and set the agenda for the next. Professional development includes time for professional conversations about what teachers are learning.

### **Suggested Areas of Improvement**

49. Within the framework of Differentiated Instruction, the district is encouraged to begin to study system-wide the strategies that teachers are implementing. What instructional strategies are being implemented? Are the strategies working? Intentionally include regular coaching on strategy implementation, realizing that each time a strategy is implemented, coaching is not always required. The Staff Development Committee could use an action research model to collect and study the implementation data generated through implementation logs and principal walk-throughs, share the findings with teachers and the SIAC, and plan the next professional development sessions using these data. District-wide, set expectations for consistent implementation to learn about changes in teaching and student learning.

## Monitoring and Accountability

School/District establishes a comprehensive system that monitors and documents performance of student progress, instructional methods, curriculum, and programs. Results from assessments drive the goal setting and decision-making processes. Leadership supports a system that regularly analyzes student performance and program effectiveness. Instructional decision-making utilizes a process of gathering, summarizing, and analyzing data.

- Establishes multiple measures to evaluate student achievement and programs
- Trend line and comparative data to evaluate effectiveness of student achievement and programs
- Communicates results of assessments and other data with stakeholders
- Decision-making process includes academic and academic-related data

### **Areas of Strength**

50. The Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data for Guthrie Center CSD demonstrated that all grade levels met the Annual Measurable Objectives (AMOs) for Mathematics and Reading for 2005-06 and 2006-07 (for All Students) with the exception of 7<sup>th</sup> grade reading in 2005-2006. Further analysis revealed that 2006-07 fifth, seventh, eighth, and eleventh grade students improved their results from 05-06 to 06-07 in Mathematics, and 06-07 third, fourth, fifth, seventh, eighth, and eleventh grade students improved their results from 05-06 to 06-07 in Reading.

#### **Guthrie Center CSD 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) Data as Measured by The Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and The Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED)**

Grade	Math	Guthrie Center Math	Guthrie Center Math	Reading	Guthrie Center Reading	Guthrie Center Reading
	State Target	05-06	06-07	State Target	05-06	06-07
3	67.4	93.94	70.37	67.7	72.73	74.07
4	68.3	85	80.49	70	82.05	90.24
5	70.8	79.41	82.61	70.5	73.53	78.26
6	66	79.55	75	62.1	77.27	72.22
7	65	77.08	81.4	64.4	62.5	81.40
8	65	82.14	83.33	66.7	78.57	81.25
11	74.2	80	95	74.2	82.22	95

\*Shaded cells identify groups that met the state target for proficiency.

51. In its 2006-2007 Annual Progress Report (APR), Guthrie Center CSD reported a graduation rate of 100% for the 2005-2006 school year. This exceeded the state graduation target of 90.78%. Graduation rate data are always reported one year in arrears.
52. In the district's most recent APR, Guthrie Center CSD reported a daily average attendance rate of 96.52% for grades K-8. This exceeded the 2005-2006 state average of 96.17%. The K-8 average daily attendance rate is always reported one year in arrears.
53. Although individual student areas of noncompliance were identified during the district's Special Education program procedural compliance review completed last fall, evidence has been submitted as of December 13, 2007 that these corrections have been made. A letter to this effect will be sent from the Heartland AEA Special Education Director.
54. In reviewing the student credentialing process and the assessment instruments used, it appears that a variety of summative assessments are used to measure student achievement. The district not only uses multiple assessments at multiple grade levels, but also uses multiple response formats to ensure a more accurate measurement of all students' academic achievement. For example, both the Iowa Tests and Northwest Education Association (NWEA) use multiple choice items, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) includes oral assessment, the district's writing assessment uses a performance measure, and the Stanford 9 includes enhanced multiple choice and open-ended items.
55. In interviews with teachers, administrators, parents, and students, it was reported students, teachers, and parents periodically review individual student assessment data. Junior high school teachers discussed their use of trendline data when conferencing with students and parents. Parents said that by reviewing data annually, they were comfortable reading the test results. One high school teacher shared the ITED Growth Chart used to assist students in analyzing their own progress. All interviewees reported the data from assessments are used in the credentialing process.
56. SIAC meetings were reported to be well planned and contain valuable learning experiences for committee members. SIAC members stated they receive a detailed agenda for every meeting from the district's curriculum director. Each meeting includes information about what is going on in the district (e.g., technology and culinary presentations, student data, interpretation of data, etc.), as well as monitoring progress with the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP). The SIAC meets at least four times a year.
57. School board members reported its commitment to implementing an effective evaluation procedure for the superintendent. Board members aligned the leadership standards with the superintendent's actions. They reported using technology so that all involved would have the same information and be clear about performance and expectations.

#### **Suggested Areas of Improvement**

58. The district has placed importance on the collection of data. Summative data (ITBS, ITED, NWEA, Benchmarking, DIBELS) are reviewed one, two, or three times a year. It is suggested the district develop a comprehensive plan to examine data. For example, the following are questions the district might consider when reviewing formative and summative data:

- Are our students in special programs (Title I, Gifted and Talented, Special Education, English as a Second Language, Read 180, etc.) making a year's growth in a year's time?
- Are all of our learners who are not credentialed making enough growth to eventually reach proficiency?
- How does the growth of our students who begin high school in Principles of Math compare to the growth of our students who begin high school in advanced mathematics courses?
- Are students in NCLB subgroups proficient? If not, is the gap closing?
- How many of our special education students are participating in one or more extra-curricular activities? How many of our gifted and talented students? How many of our English Language Learner (ELL) students?

Knowing the answers to these questions, the district is encouraged to develop an action plan and design interventions targeted to specific individual student or program needs. It appeared to the site visit team there is limited evidence of a systemic structure for the review, analysis, and use of formative data. Consider contacting the district's Partnership Director from Heartland AEA for technical assistance. Additionally, consider accessing the following resources:

- <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/1043/1170>. Additional resources can be found at <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/conent/view/1124/1174>.
59. In its 2006-2007 annual progress report (APR), the district reported 95% of its graduates indicated intent to pursue post-secondary education or training. Several interview groups reported curiosity in learning the outcome. For example, over the past six years, how many Guthrie Center graduates have completed a 4-year degree, 2-year degree, or a vocational training program? Limited graduate survey response has yielded some information about how the district prepared them for endeavors beyond high school. The high school is encouraged to continue to seek information about the success of its graduates, share the data with administrators, teachers, support staff, and the community and use the data for program improvement.
60. The Corrective Action Plan (CAP) has been written and dated; however, the CAP has not yet been fully implemented. The district will comply with full implementation within one year of the date on the original letter the district received as a result of its procedural compliance review spring, 2007 (June 13, 2008). Please refer to the non-compliance statement found in the matrix at the end of this report.
61. While it is an effective district practice, the student credentialing structure could be improved through the establishment of a formal process for documenting interventions. Administrators and general and special education teachers reported the district's credentialing structure has promoted more specific and individualized interventions for all students so that more students can achieve higher results. Consider the following suggestions:
- Document interventions consistently (e.g., type of intervention, person monitoring the intervention, data to support the use or discontinuance of the intervention, etc.).
  - Communicate timely information about the use of interventions to parents.
  - Collect specific, timely, and monitored data relating to the intervention used.
  - Develop exit criteria for interventions (e.g., what level of success does a student need to meet?) by the district or a building prior to its use.

Consider contacting Heartland AEA's Partnership Director to coordinate technical assistance and professional development on progress monitoring and 4-Point Decision-Making.

62. Though summative assessments and data collection are evident throughout the credentialing process, a systematic process for collecting and sharing formative instructional data could add greater depth. Consider the following suggestions:
- As a part of the annual curriculum review activities, teachers could identify classroom assessments that inform student progress with benchmarks and guide instruction.
  - Provide regularly planned time for teachers to share formative data with collaboration teams.
  - Building leadership teams might identify amounts and types of formative assessment to be collected by teachers and set expectations for the use of formative data.

Consider contacting the district's Heartland AEA Partnership Director to coordinate technical assistance.

63. In reviewing assessments used in the credentialing process, not all assessments appear to be aligned to district benchmarks. The benchmarking assessment instrument for reading measures student reading fluency, yet fluency is not included in the high school benchmarks. The high school is encouraged to conduct an alignment study between the high school language arts benchmarks and the benchmarking assessment to ensure relevance in the use of the instrument. Consider contacting the district's Partnership Director from Heartland AEA to coordinate technical assistance.

**Guthrie Center Community School District's Compliance Status in Federal Programs:**

**Title IIA (Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund) Compliance Status**

The school district has no citations of Title IIA non-compliance identified during this visit.

**Title IID (Enhancing Education Through Technology, E2T2) Compliance Status**

The school district has no citations of Title IID non-compliance identified during this visit.

**Title III (English Language Learners) Compliance Status**

The school district has no citations of Title III non-compliance identified during this visit.

**Title IVA (Safe and Drug Free Schools) Compliance Status**

The school district has no citations of Title IVA (SDFSC) non-compliance identified during this on-site visit.

**Title V (Innovative Programs) Compliance Status**

The school district has no citations of Title V non-compliance identified during this visit.

**Title XC (Education for Homeless Children and Youth) Compliance Status**

The school district has no citations of Title XC non-compliance identified during this visit.

## Areas of Non -Compliance

The Guthrie Center Community School District shall submit corrections or plans of correction for each of the items listed below for approval to the Site Team Leader within 45 business days of the receipt of this report. *The school or school district may choose to use the following matrix as a format for the development of an action plan or develop its own.*

Noncompliance Issue	Additional Details	Timeline
1. SECAP2. An AEA approved Special Education corrective action plan (CAP) exists but has not been fully implemented. 281—IAC 12.5 (9)	AEA verification of full implementation of the district's CAP must be submitted to the DE within one year from the Date of Notification (June 13, 2008).	June 13, 2008
2. PE1 Personnel files (substitute teachers) show no evidence of physical exams at within six weeks of the beginning of service. 281—IAC 12.4(14)	Please forward the application information notice that is given to prospective substitute teachers (listing a physical exam). Also submit an assurance from the Superintendent that all substitute teacher files contain a physical exam.	June 1, 2008

Noncompliance Issue Outside Chapter 12	Additional Details	Timeline
None noted.		