

# **NORTHERN TIER SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EXTERNAL VISITATION REPORT**

**BOYD COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT #51**

**CHAMBERS SCHOOL DISTRICT #137**

**EWING SCHOOL DISTRICT #29**

**NEBRASKA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT #1 - CLEARWATER**

**NEBRASKA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT #1 – ORCHARD**

**NEBRASKA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT #1 - VERDIGRE**

**STUART SCHOOL DISTRICT #44**

**WHEELER CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT #45**

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## **Purpose of the Visit**

The Northern Tier Schools (NTS) were organized in the summer of 2003 through an interlocal agreement. The schools involved in the Northern Tier have varied over the years since its establishment. Currently there are five school districts (Boyd County, Chambers, Ewing, Stuart, and Wheeler Central) and one unified district (Nebraska Unified District 1) consisting of three communities (Clearwater, Orchard, and Verdigre). All are located in northeastern Nebraska. Originally, the primary purposes for the Northern Tier Schools organization were to:

- Improve learning for children with disabilities;
- Develop common school improvement processes;
- Establish internal and external accountability;
- Improve learning opportunities for ALL children; and
- Improve educational efficiencies by sharing resources.

As part of this visit, the team was to give input as to whether or not they felt the original purposes for it's creation was still relevant and necessary moving into the next cycle. The first morning of the visit was spent on this endeavor. We heard from individuals of each member school as to how being part of the Northern Tier has impacted and influenced them both personally and their member school throughout the past five years. It was apparent by their input that many of the original purposes for the formation of the Northern Tier still exist today.

Visits to individual member schools to assess their individual school improvement processes and plans were also an important part of the overall visit. The vitality of a cohesive school improvement plan can

best be measured by the implementation of the plan at each individual district.

**External Visitation Team  
Northern Tier Schools  
April 30-May1, 2019**

<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>Schools</u></b>
Amy Shane, External Team Chair Superintendent, O'Neill Public Schools	Stuart and Boyd County
Bill Mowinkel Administrator, ESU #8	Stuart and Boyd County
Deb Wragge Retired Educator, Creighton, NE	Chambers and Wheeler Central
Jeff Hoelsing Superintendent, Randolph Public Schools	Chambers and Wheeler Central
Robbie Thompson Superintendent, Creighton Public Schools	Clearwater and Orchard
Bill Kuester Retired Educator, Neligh, NE	Clearwater and Orchard
Russell Lechtenberg Superintendent, Hay Springs Public Schools	Verdigre and Ewing

Paul Pistulka  
Superintendent, West Holt Public Schools

Verdigre and Ewing

## **NORTHERN TIER SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT VISITATION**

**April 30-May 1**

### **DAY ONE**

**8:30 am** • Coffee & rolls etc, at NECC in O'Neill (brief orientation for external team)

**9:00 am** • Visitation team, NTS Superintendents, Principals, School Counselors, Literacy Council members,

Introduction, and powerpoint presentation and discussion Special Education personnel, Marzano Leadership Teams

**11:30 am** Meal

### **1:00 pm Team on site visitation**

- **Clearwater** - Review Team : Rod O- Wheeler Central, Robbie Thompson, & Bill Kuester
- **Ewing** - Review Team : Chuck K-Verdigre, Russ Lechtenberg & Paul Pistulka
- **Stuart** – Review Team : Cathy C- Orchard , Amy Shane & Bill Mowinkel
- **Chambers** – Review Team : Mike B- Boyd County, Deb Wragge & Jeff Hoelsing

**4:00 pm** Site school visitation Q & A and comments (brief exit report)

**5:00 pm** Evening meal for visitation team, discussion (At O'Neill)

All team members will be present – internal and external.

## **DAY TWO**

### **7:30 - 8:00 am Teams arrive at schools for site visits**

- **Verdigre** - Review Team: Greg A –Ewing, Russ Lechtenberg & Paul Pistulka
- **Boyd County** - Review Team: Robert H – Stuart, Amy Shane & Bill Mowinkel
- **Orchard** - Review Team: Frank J- Chambers, Robbie Thompson & Bill Kuester
- **Wheeler Central** - Review Team: Mike S- Clearwater, Deb Wragge & Jeff Hoelsing

**12:00 pm** Visitation team meal with school staff for Q & A and comments (brief exit report)

**1:00 pm** Return to O'Neill for development of NTS Exit Report

**1:30 pm** Begin work on exit report – only External Team Members need to be present

**4:00 pm** Concluding meeting, exit report and meal (team, administrators, and board members)

**6:00 pm** Concluding comments

# Northern Tier Composite Report

## Overview:

This visit was postponed due to the incredible flooding in their geographic areas. Bridges were out and made getting to some of the districts a real challenge. The schools are to be commended for continuing to educate students under adverse circumstances.

The Northern Tier schools continue to evolve and change as new and various demands are put on Nebraska's schools. They conducted internal visits in 2017 to provide interim feedback to member schools. All those involved commented that this was a beneficial use of time and effort. The visit confirmed that schools were working toward their individual school improvement goals. It was also mentioned that they found the need to continue to re-educate staff, board members, etc. on the purpose of the Northern Tier. This was a theme that our visitation also heard, especially from staff members not directly involved in the school improvement process. None of the teachers or students interviewed at the individual school sites knew the Northern Tier's CIP goal, so couldn't speak to how they were addressing it. These same staff members were aware of their individual district/school goal and were able to share how they were working to achieve it. All staff members seemed to be invested in their district's personal CIP goals. The CIP information presented for each district was inconsistent based on what the district chose to share, so some visitation members had more or less to review. Ms. Kirwin worked hard to create a very user friendly website for all districts to post their CIP information to.

As documented above, the initial reasons for the formation of the Northern Tier Schools were varied. Many discussed that one of the most important reasons, other than those listed above, for the formation of the Northern Tier was the consolidation of data for submission to the NDE for student performance purposes. Standing individually, the

districts' data would have been masked at the state level, but the consolidation allowed the group to report visible data to NDE. They were recognized as one entity on the State of the Schools Report that documented assessment and accountability data for No Child Left Behind. Schools belonging to the Northern Tier have been aggregating their data since the group was formed, and continue to do so to the present. Aggregation of data from so many schools is time consuming, so during this cycle the group hired an individual to do this, as well as organize the groups CIP efforts. Jenny Stracke was the initial person to serve in this role, following her passing the administrators once again took over. This past year Holli Kerwin was hired to work with the data and prepare for the external visit. The Northern Tier indicated that they had reached their goal of 85% proficiency in all curricular areas assessed by NSCAS, although in reviewing the data, the team didn't necessarily concur with this.

The visitation team believes that the sun-setting and replacement of NCLB and NeSA by ESSA and the NSCAS has brought changes in the need for this consolidated data. The new NEP (Nebraska Educational Profile) doesn't consider the Northern Tier to be a reporting entity, rather it requires each school district and school to report results individually. The group may determine that there is still value in combining assessment data, but from the team's perspective this may be a piece of work that can be abandoned at this point. The Northern Tier schools may want to continue to sponsor "data days" where each school works to analyze their own data and use those results, but the focus can and should be on using that data to inform instruction.

The Northern Tier schools asked teachers to complete a perceptual survey concerning staff development. They were asked what would most benefit their instruction to promote student achievement; the most dominant response was grade level meetings to discuss specific student needs, following by technology integration and differentiated instruction. This survey points to all of the staffs' desires to continue to



get together regularly to discuss common curricular issues, classroom management/behavior concerns, and share other items of interest by grade level and/or subject area. The team does feel that this is a fundamental need that can be met by the Northern Tier structure. It seemed that these kinds of staff development days have become more infrequent. The team suggested that they are held at least annually, whether via zoom or in person.

Internal Northern Tier groups; such as, the Literacy Council, the Counselor's group and Administrators group also seem to fill an important role for the member schools. Many staff members mentioned that members of the Literacy Council brought important information back to their schools, to be used as needed. Some discussion was held about the Council focusing too exclusively on Reading Mastery in some instances, although we believe that this has been recognized of late and they are taking steps to make the subject matter of their meetings more "generic" topics related to literacy. The team suggests that the Council continue to take this approach to meeting agendas.

### **Commendations:**

- There continues to be a strong leadership group at the helm of the Northern Tier. We believe that together they will lead their schools toward success. Be sure that everyone has an equal voice in charting the path into the future to ensure that all member schools see value in the organization.
- All of the students that we visited with at member schools were well spoken and very proud of their schools. Be sure to celebrate success with them, as well as with staff.
- Hiring an individual to assist with data consolidating and organization was a positive for the NTS. Although there was some disruption in this and we see the consolidating of data to be less important now, there is still a lot that an individual focused on curriculum and instruction and data analysis can provide for

- member schools. The team recommends continuing to contract with someone for these services, even if they are provided at an individual district/school level.
- Collaboration, networking, shared professional development, and “accountability to the whole” is vital to the success of this group. The Northern Tier Schools continue to use this framework to make each of their districts stronger. Continue to survey staff and students to provide these things in the most relevant ways.
  - The Northern Tier Schools continue to make great use of ESU resources. Having someone from the Service Unit at the monthly meetings is a great idea. By staying up to date on the discussions that member schools are having, the ESU can “cater” to their needs.
  - The mid-cycle peer reviews were a brilliant idea and really seemed to energize the individual districts’ in their CIP efforts. We highly recommend continuing that practice into the next cycle.

### **Recommendations:**

- The team really likes the vision statement “Quality Schools United, Great Opportunities Provided”. Consider developing an organizational mission or goal that revolves around this vision, rather than a common academic goal for the next cycle. Member schools can continue to work together on a variety of projects without having that common academic goal, this will allow each district to analyze its own data and focus on its specialized academic needs more thoroughly.
- Continue to provide time for group professional development. Consider summer meetings, Zoom and/or DL meetings, in addition to more traditional school day meetings. Trying to get grade levels/departments together a minimum of twice per year would be valuable.
- Continue to employ an individual to assist with data analysis, curriculum and assessment, and CIP. They could work with

individual Northern Tier school districts as well as the larger group. They could also be in charge of organizing the mid-cycle peer visits.

- Ensure that the Literacy Council addresses all aspects of literacy and isn't mono-focuses on Reading Mastery or any other reading program. There are many aspects of literacy that will benefit all students/staff members without being program directed.
- Look toward growth as a measuring stick district by district, rather than setting goals such as 85% of students will be proficient in all curricular areas.
- Additional work is needed in some district's target area goals. It was hard to determine what data had been used to arrive at goals and the goals were not always easily measurable. Some districts didn't specify action steps and responsibilities on their action plans.

# **Nebraska Framework Report Northern Tier Public School District Boyd County Public Schools *Continuous Improvement Process Report***

**Team Members: Amy Shane and Bill Mowinkle**

## **I. Buildings/District Overview**

Boyd County Public School District is a Pre-K – 12 grade consolidation of West Boyd Public Schools and Lynch Public Schools. This was the first year of operation as a fully consolidated county school district. Both Butte and Lynch offer Pre-K – 4<sup>th</sup> grade elementary schools, while Spencer hosts the 5-8 middle school and the 9-12 high school. Class sizes vary from 15 in 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 28 in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Total enrollment at all three sites is 342. The elementary school at Butte has single grade classrooms, while Lynch has combined 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> classrooms. There are three administrators, an elementary principal, a middle school/high school principal and a superintendent. All three seemed to work together well for the well being of the whole district. The district was drastically impacted by this spring's flooding, some students actually lost their homes and all experienced an interruption in their education. Pallets of water were visible signs of the continued struggle. All staff members were acutely aware of the trauma experienced by their students and worked hard to make them feel safe and valued during their time at school. Their acknowledgement of the basic needs portion of Maslow's Hierarchy prior to learning was evident. Their hearts are big and their care for each child was obvious to the visitors.

## II. Description of the Continuous Improvement Process

An enormous amount of work has gone into trying to unite the three communities into one cohesive CIP plan. They have held monthly CIP meetings, and created a number of teams, including CIP, Building and Grounds, Policy and Technology. Each staff member serves on at least one team. Staff members have developed a mission statement, vision statement and a motto for the district in one short year! A common factor in each was building productive citizens. As we visited all three sites, a recurring theme developed. That theme was the desire to develop a school district with its own unified identity.

## III. Goals

The district selected the academic goal of improving vocabulary, “All students will improve vocabulary in all content areas”. The goal appears to be a new one with an incomplete action plan. This is not surprising considering this essentially “year one” of this new district’s CIP plan. Although it felt as if the selection was a bit hurried, and not as rooted in data analysis as it should be, there was good staff buy in.

There was also a non-academic goal of developing a cohesive district identity. “Boyd County Schools will improve internal atmosphere and external perceptions of the school district through better communication”. They did a survey of stakeholders in all three communities, and had a great response rate with 138 individuals answering the questions. According to the survey, 54.4% felt that Boyd County Public Schools was developing it’s own identity. This should be very encouraging to the staff and administration.

#### IV. Commendations

- All staff members showed a “get ‘r done”, “we’ll take care of us” attitude.
- The work that has been put into the physical plants of the three schools is commendable. Great work with the remodeling in a short period of time on a small budget.
- The development of the Boyd County Classroom Essentials was a great way to provide consistency from classroom to classroom regardless of which building you were in.

#### V. Recommendations

- Don’t expect too much too soon. Developing an identity takes time. You have a good start, let it grow organically.
- Really pay attention to data and where it leads you. Make sure that your goals are firmly rooted in data and then be deliberate about your execution of interventions and action plan.
- In planning for future visits, try and provide time for student and other stakeholder interviews.

# **Nebraska Framework Report Northern Tier Public School District Chambers Public Schools *Continuous Improvement Process Report***

**Team Members: Deb Wragge and Jeff Hoelsing**

## **I. Building/District Overview**

Chambers Public School is a Pre-K -12 district with a membership of 118 with 18 teachers. They have added a principal to their administrative team since the last CIP visit. This has allowed greater attention to staff members and students. The latest AQuESST designation for the district was needs improvement, but the district is working hard to identify and address areas of need.

## **II. Description of the Continuous Improvement Process**

In the fall of 2014, CPS adopted the Reading and Vocabulary goals that many other Northern Tier Schools were focusing on. In the fall of 2017, the district re-evaluated their goals based on data from their MAP Growth Assessments. A trend in low science assessment scores was identified. In the spring of 2018, the district created an Action Plan and SMART goals in the area of science instruction.

The visitation team interviewed board members, teachers, students, parents and administration as part of their visitation process. All seemed to be engaged in the work of the district. They were all strongly cohesive in their support of the school and its role in the community.

### III. Goals

The district's academic goal was:

Increase science knowledge, application of knowledge, and retention of knowledge.

### IV. Commendations

- The district recognized and responded to the academic needs of their students in “mid-stream” of the 5-year CIP cycle. Good documentation exists that will help provide pre and post assessment data in the form of MAPS scores.
- Stakeholders believe that the district consistently exhibits a strong culture of family values and self-worth, which in turn supports them in all situations and creates an atmosphere of value and purpose.
- Each stakeholder group was vested in Chambers Public Schools and declared ownership and responsibility for the successes and challenges of the district. They are celebrators and survivors.
- Pride in who you are and what you value is evident in all aspects of the school. Hallways are filled with examples of student work. Bulletin boards documenting and celebrating student success and honors were found throughout the facility.
- The number of grade 7-12 students involved in extracurricular activities is stellar. Few district entertain the level of participation that Chambers has achieved.
- Parents freely discussed both strong and weak points of their district in a manner that reflected optimism for their school.
- Board members revealed a strong grasp of their role in both the CIP and district governance.



- The initiative of the staff to follow their own needs and not specifically rely on the Northern Tier schools to provide them with goals and action plans.
- A marked improvement in developing, initiating and follow-through of CIP goals by the teaching staff compared to previous cycles.

#### V. Recommendations

- Make membership in the Northern Tier relevant to what you are trying to accomplish in your individual CIP goals. There is much to be gained by belonging to the larger organization, especially in the areas of:
  - Professional development
  - Accountability in pursuing CIP goals and
  - Collaboration among teachers of like subjects or grade levels.
- Consider professional development as a way to improve or tweak current practices in your building. It isn't intended to replace the best practices developed by your staff. It should not be viewed as threatening or, conversely, over-relied upon to provide a structure for classroom instruction.
- Admittedly, most schools struggle with a sustained, organized effort to improve. Getting all staff to “pull in the same direction” can be a daunting task. Membership in the Northern Tier is a time-tested way to hold individual schools accountable in a non-threatening manner. It also provides the leeway, to set individual goals while still requiring the school to justify their academic progress (or lack of progress) to peer schools with similar demographic characteristics. We recommend continued membership for the upcoming cycle.

- Continue to collaborate with Northern Tier Schools. Schools of Chambers size will benefit from the opportunity to collaborate with like grade level or subject area teachers. The administrative collaboration will ensure that the district stays up to date on statewide initiatives and requirements and will hold the district to continued progress on their CIP.

# **Nebraska Framework Report Northern Tier Public School District Clearwater Public Schools *Continuous Improvement Process Report***

**Team Members: William Kuester and Robbie Thompson**

I. Building/District Overview

Clearwater Public Schools is part of Nebraska Unified School District #1 consisting of Clearwater, Orchard and Verdigre. The unification took place over 20 years ago. Twenty-four certified staff members and 13 support staff serve approximately 168 students in grades Pre-K – 12<sup>th</sup>. Extra-curricular activities are cooped with Orchard Public Schools. They are currently engaged in an effort to consolidate with Orchard and Ewing Public Schools. They are actively working on a bond election to build a new Pre-K – 12<sup>th</sup> grade school to house students from all three districts.

II. Description of CIP Process

The CIP plan has predominately been led by administration and the leadership team. ESU #8 staff members have been heavily involved in assisting the district in their CIP process. The CIP team analyzed school data, shared that information at staff in-service meetings, reviewed test data on an on-going basis and worked to implement their action plan to reach their goal. Clearwater's action plan was well formulated, delegating action steps and those responsible to address the individual CIP goal that they selected.

III. Goal(s)

All students will improve academic achievement by creating and implementing a common language of instruction to be used across the district.

#### IV. Commendations

- Offers a large number of dual credit classes, as well as a Senior Transition Program and internships.
- Addressing social-emotion/bullying issues pro-actively, utilizing the 2<sup>nd</sup> Step Program.
- Has dug into Marzano by providing solid professional development facilitated by the ESU. They are working on an evaluation system based on their instructional framework.
- Taking part actively in collaborating with other Northern Tier schools through the Literacy Council, grade level and content area meetings, counselor's gatherings, etc.
- Students feel prepared in the areas of science and math.
- The school collects a lot of good data – do a better job of showing how you are using it to make curriculum changes and inform instruction.
- There is strong leadership driving the CIP process.

#### V. Recommendations

- Develop a strong understand in all staff of what the Northern Tier's purpose is
- Be sure and include students in discussions concerning unification and/or consolidation; they want to be heard. This might be done through the Student Council or National Honor Society.
- Although the leadership is strong, the staff needs to have more ownership in the CIP process.
- Students expressed some concern about not doing enough writing. Be deliberate in providing plenty of these opportunities throughout the curricular areas.
- Celebrate success! You are doing a great job!

**Nebraska Framework Report**  
**Northern Tier Public School District**  
**Ewing Public Schools**  
***Continuous Improvement Process Report***

**Team Members: Russ Lechtenberg and Paul Pistulka**

- I. Building/District Overview  
Ewing Public Schools educates approximately 150 Pre-K – 12 grade students. Staff includes 24 teachers, 5 para-educators, a full time principal and a part time superintendent. They are currently engaged in an effort to consolidate with Orchard and Clearwater Public Schools. They are actively working on a bond election to build a new Pre-K – 12<sup>th</sup> grade school to house students from all three districts. They will coop activities with Orchard and Clearwater during the 2019-20 school year, except for football which will be cooped with CWC.
  
- II. Description of CIP Process  
Ewing created their mission, vision, and belief statements alongside the Northern Tier Schools during the spring of 2014 and the fall of 2015. They also collected perceptual data through surveys in the fall of 2015. Teacher groups helped to create some of the districts goals for this CIP cycle, other goals were created by the administration and the school board. Use of data to drive these decisions was not apparent.
  
- III. Goal(s)  
**Staff selected:**  
Ewing Public Schools will emphasize and work to improve reading and writing across the curriculum and to have students answer in complete sentences.

Ewing Public Schools will promote proper social and personal traits.

Ewing Public Schools will reduce/eliminate cyber-bullying and bullying.

**Administration selected:**

Ewing Public Schools will implement the Marzano model of instruction for all staff.

**School Board and Administration selected:**

Ewing Public Schools will implement and fund a preschool program for four-year-olds.

IV. Commendations

- The district has made good progress in implementing the Marzano instructional model. The administration has led the process and included staff in how to implement it and select the 7 elements to focus on. Staff was glad to be involved and have some investment in the process.
- The addition of the preschool has been a great thing for the district. The program has a strong teacher and administrative support.
- The district is well aware of the challenges it faces; including, possible consolidation, struggling test scores, staff transition through retirements, and changing student demographics.
- A great start has been made in developing a character education program. Incorporating it into the regular classrooms as well as involving all students through assemblies are great next steps. Hopefully progress will continue when a new counselor is hired.
- Implementation of an MTSS process is a positive direction for the district. Organizing interventions and progress monitoring of at-risk students should help to close the gap with all students.

- Faculty and students alike were very high on the school environment and relationships within the buildings. All faculty felt they were able to have honest conversations with each other, and that they would step up and do what is needed for students. The students feel safe and respected in school.
- The faculty displayed an attitude of progressiveness and is actively working toward their CIP goals, not just jumping through hoops.

#### V. Recommendations

- Continue to focus on the MTSS process. There is some concern about implementing the process with all grade levels, if it becomes overwhelming, consider focusing on K-3 rather than K-6.
- Be sure to continue the character education program that has been developed. Set it up in a way that ensures that teachers are invested enough to keep it moving even with changes in the counselor's position.
- Find an avenue to support your struggling 7-12 students, with a focus on 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades. Consider more collaboration time with teachers to discuss particular student development or create an instrument such as a Google Doc. Where teachers can share, so there is a better picture of each student across all classes.
- Communicate more positive behaviors and performances with parents prior to negatives having to be communicated. This might create more avenues for parent collaboration and communication.

# **Nebraska Framework Report Northern Tier Public School District Orchard Public Schools *Continuous Improvement Process Report***

**Team Members: William Kuester and Robbie Thompson**

I. Building/District Overview

Orchard Public Schools is part of Nebraska Unified School District #1 consisting of Clearwater, Orchard and Verdigre. The unification took place over 20 years ago. Nineteen certified teachers serve approximately 135 students in grades Pre-K – 12<sup>th</sup>. Extra-curricular activities are cooped with Clearwater Public Schools. They are currently engaged in an effort to consolidate with Clearwater and Ewing Public Schools. They are actively working on a bond election to build a new Pre-K – 12<sup>th</sup> grade school to house students from all three districts.

II. Description of CIP Process

III. Goals

IV. Commendations

- There is a very positive culture that is reflected throughout the school, as seen on the walls and in the attitudes and demeanors of staff and students alike!
- The school has a very organized and systemic approach to instruction.
- The district has exhibited a strong commitment to Marzano and MTSS. They are building a common language for instruction that will continue to serve them well into the future.



- Both the principal and superintendent exhibit very positive leadership. Their enthusiasm is supported by the staff, who exemplify the same positive attitude.
- The work ethic of the staff serves as a positive model for students.
- Celebration of student and staff success is apparent through posters and other visible symbols of accomplishments on display throughout the building.
- The school provides many opportunities for their high school students to get ready for post-secondary endeavors, including but not limited to, distance learning, dual credit, and participation in Fridays at Northeast.

V. Recommendations

- Utilize distance learning for professional development to minimize windshield time and allow teachers to remain in their classrooms. You might consider early out or summer flex days for professional development as well.

**Nebraska Framework Report**  
**Northern Tier Public School District**  
**Stuart Public School**  
***Continuous Improvement Process Report***

**Team Members: Amy Shane and Bill Mowinkle**

I. Building/District Overview

Stuart Public School is a Pre-K-12 system of approximately 190 students. The 20 member staff is a mixture of very veteran teachers intermixed with a few more recent hires. The pride in being a Stuart Bronco was evident in visiting with the staff and students alike. There is very strong community support for the school district, which isn't always the case. There is a growing focus on CTE and a growing number of students are participating in the Fridays at Northeast program. The district provides a healthy technology environment with Chromebooks and iPads available throughout the district. There is a building project in the works with a write in bond election hoping to fund it. The remodel and renovation plans will move forward in some fashion regardless of the outcome of the bond election, as they have a healthy building fund established.

II. Description of CIP Process

The CIP process for this current cycle has admittedly administrative driven. The superintendent has led these efforts and done most of the work during this cycle. He recognized how busy his staff was, and tried to take this off their plates for the most part. He recognizes that this may not be possible during this next cycle, as he is transitioning towards retirement.

In visiting with staff, they are willing and somewhat excited about taking a more active role in the next CIP cycle. Stuart's scores are quite strong for the most part, exceeding the state average in virtually all areas. It was not obvious what data they had used to determine the need for their district level CIP goal, which was focused on the area of math.

### III. Goals

Stuart's district level goals was: Students will improve math computation and number sense through critical thinking skills and utilizing technology.

They also had a reading goal that mirrored the Northern Tier goal: All students who participate in the NeSA subject assessments will meet the Met or Exceed levels at 85%.

There was not documentation of interventions for the math goal on the action plan.

### IV. Commendations

- We love the Vision Statement: Stuart - Students and Teachers United in Achieving Responsible Thinkers.
- The progress in the area of CTE is commendable. Stuart Public School is working hard to prepare their students for their next steps!
- NSCAS scores are good, above the state average in all areas. Be sure and celebrate your success with staff and students. Let your parents and community know how you're doing.
- The district is forward thinking, preparing for the future in regards to facility needs.
- The district has strong leadership, from the school board down. They are planning for transitions as a number of veteran staff members are nearing retirement age.

- The staff is totally invested in helping their students be the best they can be. We heard examples of this time after time.

#### V. Recommendations

- Include all staff members in data analysis. Encourage them to use data when selecting their CIP goals for the next round. Math scores were outstanding, so choosing a math goal didn't make a lot of sense to the visitors.
- Empower all staff members to take ownership of the CIP process. They may need some training on the process, but they will do great things.
- Listen to students. They were very articulate and had strong feelings about a number of academic items.

**Nebraska Framework Report**  
**Northern Tier Public School District**  
**Verdigre Public Schools**  
***Continuous Improvement Process Report***

**Team Members: Russ Lechtenberg and Paul Pistulka**

I. Building/District Overview

Verdigre Public Schools is part of Nebraska Unified School District #1 consisting of Clearwater, Orchard and Verdigre. The unification took place over 20 years ago. Twenty-two certified staff members and sixteen classified staff members serve approximately 150 students in grades Pre-K – 12<sup>th</sup>. Extra-curricular activities are cooped with Niobrara Public Schools. Verdigre built a new high school in 2011 that will serve its students well into the future. This year's floods impacted them in a significant way, specifically their athletic complex.

II. Description of CIP Process

Verdigre has participated in the Unified District school improvement efforts. The vision statement for Nebraska Unified is "Unification for a Quality Education!" Their mission statement reads: Nebraska Unified District #1 will provide a challenging and diverse education for lifelong success in a safe and positive environment through a unified commitment. They participated in data analysis and developing their action plans for math and Marzano. Verdigre selected a math goal as their school goal. This goal was particularly focused on the high school. A change in staff greatly impacted students' performance in the area of math. Students now show more interest in math, and the teacher has started a "math club". Several students also participated in a math contest this past year.

### III. Goals

1. ALL students will improve math competence
2. All students will improve academic achievement by creating and implementing a common language of instruction (Marzano model of teaching and learning) to be used across the district.

### IV. Commendations

- Verdigre's commitment to the Marzano framework is strong. Mr. Kucera has ensured that this has been a collaborative process with the teachers. They have developed a new teacher evaluation instrument that will be implemented next year. They hope that the new instrument will allow evaluations to become more conversational and growth related, rather than a punitive one-way conversation.
- The technology available to students is truly a strength for the school. Grades 3-12 are 1:1 with chromebooks, while students in K-2 have iPads available to them. Teachers also have interactive boards in their classrooms and many high school teachers use an online learning system such as Canvas or Google Classroom.
- The district hosts a STEM night, where students lead activities in the areas of math and science for all age groups, from very young students to adults.
- Verdigre has taken advantage of many grant opportunities. They have obtained a tower garden system for their FFA/Ag Ed program as well as six surfacebooks that are utilized for business and technology instruction.
- The school has strong community support. They are fundraising to purchase new school playground

system. Their goal is to raise approximately half of the \$80,000 cost of the equipment. Up to now they have raised \$32,000, no small feat in a community of their size!

- There is a strong sense of community within the building, inclusive of teachers, administration and everyone else working in the building. The large number of Verdigre alumnus that have come back to teach in their hometown is very commendable. This speaks to the commitment that the community has put into the school and the graduates understand the importance of the role they play in a small community.

V. Recommendations

- The MTSS process is very much in the beginning phase. Put a real focus on this process and role it out in a positive collaborative manner.
- Explore potential expansion of Career and Technical education, either “in house” or over distance learning.

# **Nebraska Framework Report Northern Tier Public School District Wheeler Central Public Schools *Continuous Improvement Process Report***

**Team Members: Deb Wragge and Jeff Hoelsing**

## **I. Building/District Overview**

Wheeler Central Public School is the only school district in Wheeler County. Approximately twenty-one certified staff members, four para-educators, and six additional classified staff serve approximately 90 students in grades Pre-K – 12<sup>th</sup>. The district offers a full day 4-year-old pre-school opportunity and a half day 3-year-old pre-school opportunity. They also offer a certified Daycare for up to 8 students. Extra-curricular activities are cooped with Chambers Public Schools. Wheeler Central provides a 1:1 Macbook environment for students in grades 7-12 and iPads for students in grades K-6.

## **II. Description of CIP Process**

The district has a well-developed and well-structured CIP team that consists of a leadership team (superintendent, principal, counselor, tech coordinator, assessment/curriculum director, and teacher leader) that meets weekly, and a CIP Committee (all staff members plus four community members) that meet monthly. In the fall of 2014 the team reviewed data, selected vocabulary as their school goal, and wrote an action plan to address it. They had a number of interventions that targeted this goal, including but not limited to, Marzano vocabulary and Anita Archer vocabulary trainings. They also asked individual teachers to have a related personal goal in the area of



vocabulary. The district also established a Marzano goal in the fall of 2018.

### III. Goals

All students will improve vocabulary knowledge in each content area.

### IV. Commendations

- The district has an active, well sustained CIP process that includes staff involvement “across the board”.
- The monthly CIP meetings help all staff members stay current and new staff members get up to speed quickly. New staff are nurtured and encouraged to fully participate right from the start
- There are good “drivers” within the building. They are passionate but not overbearing. They provided guidance, data, etc. but also support autonomy. Other staff members are good “passengers”; it takes both!
- There is good accountability for CIP within the building. Everyone is actively involved in what needs to be done.
- All students knew of the vocabulary goal, and the depth of their participation and learning was strong. They gave good examples of what they were doing in the classroom.

### V. Recommendations

- Continue with the current process, as you either continue to work on your vocabulary goal or select a new goal. Your process is your hallmark.
- Vocabulary practices and assessment are well established. Given that, the district needs to determine if they will stay with vocabulary knowledge as their goal or if they will select a new goal.