

School Improvement

External Team

Visitation Report

for

Nebraska Framework Schools

Wilcox-Hildreth Public Schools

Wilcox, Nebraska

February 18, 2019



NEBRASKA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

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Onsite Review Agenda

Wilcox-Hildreth External Visitation Agenda

February 18, 2019

(updated 1/28/19)

Monday, February 18, 2019

8:00 – 8:15 (Wilcox)

Steering Committee, External Team Members and Admin.

Meet and Greet, Coffee, rolls (Math/Alt. Ed. Room)

8:15 - 9:00

Meet with Administration/Steering Committee (introduction and presentation in Math/Alt. Ed. Room)

Tour of Wilcox building if there is time

9:15 – 9:30

Travel to Middle School in Hildreth

9:30 - 10:45 (Hildreth)

- Classroom observations/tour (9:30-10:20)

Middle school student interview and parent Interviews (external team splits into 2 groups)

- Meet with a group of six students for interview (10:20-10:45) Mrs. Simmons room #24
- Meet with a group of six parent for interview (10:20-10:45) Admin. Office

10:45 - 11:00

Return to Wilcox

11:00 – 12:00 (Wilcox)

High school interview and Observations - external team can split if needed

- Meet with a group of six high school students for interview 11:00-11:20 (math/alt ed. room)
- High School Classroom observations (11:20-12:00)

12:00 - 1:00

Working Lunch with School Board Members (math/alt ed. room)

1:00 – 2:00

Continue observations in Wilcox

Elementary Classroom observations and interviews

- Meet with a group of six elem. students for interview (math/alt ed. room) (1:15-1:30)
- Some external team members may be having additional work time.

2:00 – 4:00

External team meeting and work time

4:00 – 4:30 (All Staff Welcome and Encouraged to Attend)

Present External Team preliminary report to Steering Committee and staff in the Music Room

Introductory Comments

Team Leader:
Stephen M. Osborn

A. Purpose of the External Visitation

In stating the purpose of a Nebraska Department of Education Framework External Visitation there are three charges given to the visitation team in the initial stages of the process. 1.) To assist a school in selecting or fulfilling school improvement goals and plans by adding an outside, objective view of the school improvement process; 2.) Enlist the professional advice of colleagues from outside the district, and 3.) Increase the depth of understanding for moving forward to achieve school improvement goals.

Nebraska State Statute (009.01 B) states that "The school improvement process includes a visitation by a team of external representatives to review progress and provide written recommendations." A copy of the written recommendations is provided to NDE. The external team visits are conducted at least once each five years.

The External Visitation team visited the campuses of Wilcox-Hildreth Public Schools with the aforementioned information in mind. The group set out to observe what the district is currently doing and provide objective feedback as to what it is they are doing well and also provide objective feedback as to what can be done to enhance or improve as the district moves forward.

B. Description of the Process for Gathering Information for the External Team Report

The Wilcox-Hildreth School Leadership Team and School Improvement Team presented the External Visitation team with an electronic portfolio of data and information regarding their goal for "All Wilcox-Hildreth students will improve vocabulary knowledge across the curriculum."

Throughout the day, the External Visitation Team had the opportunity to meet with staff and students in small group settings to enhance their understanding of the school improvement process and progress. The External Visitation Team visited all of the district buildings and campus areas to see students working in their learning environments.

C. Background Information Specific to the District

Wilcox-Hildreth Public School began its existence in August of 2002 after patrons of the Hildreth Public School and Wilcox Public School voted to merge the two districts in June of 2002. The Wilcox-Hildreth Public School facilities are located in Wilcox (K-4 and 9-12) and Hildreth (grades 5-8). Wilcox has a population of approximately 360 and is located in the southwest portion of Kearney County. Hildreth has a population of approximately 380 and is located in the north central section of Franklin County. The school district extends within four counties including: Kearney, Franklin, Harlan, and Phelps and includes approximately 350 square miles. District boundaries go approximately 16 miles south-to-north and approximately 23 miles east-to-west. The district employs two full time administrators, twenty-eight certificated staff members, and thirty-four full-time and three part-time classified staff members. The low student-teacher ratio is conducive to promoting a strong learning environment. Wilcox-Hildreth Schools offer a variety of required and elective academic classes. Academics coupled with extra-curricular activities lead to well-rounded educational opportunities. All levels and disciplines have incorporated character education and multiculturalism units into the curriculum. In the fall of 2005, Wilcox - Hildreth purchased and provided a laptop computer for each high school student in grades 9-12. Grades 7-8 are issued laptops during the school day.

D. Additional Remarks, etc.

Mission: The Mission of Wilcox-Hildreth Public Schools is to teach skills and provide experience in a positive environment and to prepare students for success in an ever changing world.

Philosophy: The Wilcox-Hildreth School District #50-001-000 Board of Education is aware of its responsibilities in promoting a sound, well-balanced academic program. We realize the necessity of a solid core foundation on which to build such a program. The aim of the district is to develop healthy, useful and well-adjusted citizens of a democratic society. Our immediate and long-range objectives to accomplish this are: 1.) A strong staff of well-prepared, well-trained and well-paid teachers. 2.) Adequate buildings and equipment. 3.) A practical course of study to include refinements of social living. 4.) Modern methods of study and instruction. 5.) Value for every dollar of taxpayers' money expended. 6.) An opportunity for every child to make the most of his physical and mental assets. 7.) Instruction in morals, values and ideals in keeping with the American tradition and way of life. 8.) To work with the local community in those areas which lead to better educational opportunities for students. Education is a continuing process. Within this process, the Wilcox-Hildreth Public Schools District #50-001-000 provides various meaningful learning experiences, to enable its students to live fully and completely, as citizens in a complex, technological and global society. Therefore, the primary concern of this school district is to guide each student into realizing and working toward his/her greatest potential.

The Board of Education believes that the school should provide a stimulating environment for learning experiences which will provide every student an opportunity for a satisfactory adjustment to live in our democratic society.

Overview of Improvement Process

Reviewers' names: Stephen M. Osborn, Medicine Valley Public Schools
Lori Welch, Medicine Valley Public Schools
Hillary Bentley, Elwood Public Schools
Robert Drews, Holdrege High School
Mark Grove, Southern Valley Schools

1. Description of the Continuous Improvement Process: (Team membership, timelines, summary of activities, and for public schools, a description of how multicultural education is incorporated into the process.)

The Wilcox-Hildreth School Improvement Team includes: Ken Meyers, Sarah Wall, Brandy Lunsford, and Kelly Simmons. Additionally, the District Leadership team of Mr. Carl Dietz (Superintendent) and Mr. Justin Patterson (Secondary Principal) were involved in the process.

The School Improvement Committee meets every Friday afternoon, since they have an early out on Fridays, to analyze data and review other areas of school improvement. The action plan outlines several strategies and activities related to the school improvement process. Many of the strategies and activities have been completed but not all have been consistently implemented..

There is recognition of the Continuous Improvement Process by staff but there is a varied response to its importance and related activities that the staff participates in. In moving forward, consistency and a unified effort throughout the district in working towards the district goal would be a positive.

As the District embarks on the next cycle, it is important to build more time in to the schedule where staff can collaborate and work on goals. Continued training of new staff in APL is needed so the success can continue. And lastly more

communication with parents and patrons about the school improvement process and goal would strengthen the ties between home and school. These recommended items will lead to improved student learning and help with the overall school improvement process.

II. Commendations: (Successful Activities, Procedures and Accomplishments in the Overall Progress of the School Improvement Process)

1. Commitment to Maintaining a Positive School Climate: Relationships between students, staff, and administration was very positive. Through interviews with students, it was repeatedly stated that the district is “composed of supportive and caring educators who provide a quality education.” Students see their teachers as helpful and caring individuals who see them as an important person in their classroom. Students commented numerous times that they appreciate the low teacher-to-student ratio, which allows them to receive more individualized instructional assistance in their classes. Student are excited and enjoy being at school. The teachers commented that the administrators are supportive of their teaching efforts.

2. Common Language of Instruction: The district has implemented the APL model of instruction. The school has aligned their evaluation tool to the APL instructional strategy model. In addition, the team saw and heard evidence of the use of APL strategies being used within the classes. This has created the common language of instruction among the staff and provides a consistent use of research based strategies such as: bell ringers, interaction sequence, check for understanding, on the clock management, wait-time extended, and closure.

3. Continuous Improvement Process: The district has embraced a more continuous improvement process during this cycle. Fidelity is vital during the continuous improvement process so continue following the steps in the continuous improvement process. The team saw and heard evidence that indicated the district created committees, wrote action plans, created a district profile, gathered student performance and perceptual data, integrated intervention strategies, and prepared to host the external visitation during the course of the five-year process.

III. Recommendations for Next Steps in the Overall School Improvement Process

As you move forward with your next five year cycle, it is imperative that you involve all the staff. Decisions need to be made as to whether you are going to continue focusing on vocabulary instruction or look at vocabulary as routine, and move your goal in a different direction. Whatever you decide to do, as a school, the next goal must be data driven. Time needs to be given where the entire staff can sit down and look for strengths and weaknesses among Wilcox-Hildreth's data. Perceptual data, such as surveys or questionnaires, also provide valuable information and need to be given to the staff, students, and parents. Finally, after looking at all the data, the staff needs time to discuss openly what areas need to be focused on for the next five year cycle.

Once a new goal is selected, we would recommend some of the following suggestions be applied.

- 1.. Build into the schedule more time (late starts, early outs, inservice days) where staff can collaborate and work on the goals. As we met with various staff members and steering committee leaders throughout the day, many of them indicated that more time was needed to implement and work together on their school improvement goals.
2. Have a formal method in place to continue training new staff in APL and the current school improvement goal. It was evident that APL was being used in all the classrooms, and it can be applied to any school improvement goal. Make a plan to train new staff who join your school, so all the time and money invested in APL is not lost. Also, make sure to explain the school improvement goal to new staff members, and the expectations or things they may need to do in their classroom to make sure this goal is being met.
3. Have more active communication with the parents and patrons about the school improvement process and goal. Your goal will become even more successful if your parents are involved.

Wilcox-Hildreth School Improvement Goal

I. Goal

All students will improve vocabulary knowledge across the curriculum.

II. Comments about the Student Performance Goal (including goals, assessments, interventions/strategies, and/or staff development)

*All teachers attend Professional Development on vocabulary instruction.

*All teachers across the curriculum use Direct Instruction to teach prefixes, suffixes and roots

*All Teachers use the following method for teaching prefixes, suffixes, and roots:
Example: hydroelectricity - "This word is hydroelectricity. The first part of the word is **hydro**. Hydro is a root that means water. So in this chapter the word hydroelectricity refers to electricity produced by the movement of water. Let's look at some of the words that include **hydro**."

*Teachers use images when possible to enhance the teaching and learning of vocabulary.

*All teachers attend Professional Development Training on the APL Model.

*Teacher incorporate the following APL techniques and strategies on a regular basis: Bell Ringers, Agenda/Objectives, Closure, Check for Understanding, Interaction Sequence (Wait Time and Wait Time Extended, Interviewing Students, and On the Clock Management).

III. Successful activities or strategies

1. Enthusiasm and knowledge of the goal and how vocabulary instruction makes an impact on learning was evident in most of the classrooms. The team was extremely impressed with all the vocabulary activities happening in the Middle School. (Quizlet, Weekly Test competitions, Finding the Vocab word in their Daily Life, Shout outs) The students at the Middle School received small incentives as motivation. The elementary and high school displayed positive vocabulary knowledge and strategies. Some of the motivational incentives and teacher strategies used at the Middle

School would benefit the elementary and high school students if implemented.

2. The MAPs data shows reading scores are improving. Continue to use these scores to monitor how students are doing.
3. APL teaching strategies/training is a priority. Continue to place an emphasis on the APL strategies it will only prove to strengthen your students' learning.

IV. Recommendations for next steps

1. Place consistent emphasis on vocabulary instruction across all grade levels and subject areas. Most teachers were implementing some vocabulary instruction, but it was not consistent in every classroom. Utilize the resources of ESU #11 to provide staff curriculum development in vocabulary.
2. Post the school improvement goal in every classroom. By placing it in every classroom, it shows the importance of the goal to all the students. You could even post the goal in the gym, the cafeteria, and the restrooms.
3. Individual Student Goal Setting: Share the student scores with the students so students develop an ownership in their learning. Also have the students apply some goal setting to their MAPs scores and any other tests they may take. Look at the detailed breakdown among the MAPs reports. Specifically the vocabulary section on the reading test since the goal is to improve vocabulary. These detailed reports will help narrow in on what specific skills the students are struggling with, and the areas teachers need to focus on.