

Promising Practices and Implementation Tools

1. Names & Positions:

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Elizabeth Barry- Executive Director, Learning and Teaching, PreK-8

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3. Lever Addressed: Organizational Structure

4. Title of Promising Practice: Brockton's School Structure: Interrelated to All Levers for School Improvement

5. District(s) Where Implemented: Brockton Public Schools

6. Applicable Grade Levels: K-12

7. How This Practice Reflects District's Mission & Core Values:

This promising practice reflects the district's mission to "Learn, Teach, Inspire and Achieve", and related commitments to achieve this mission, such as "enhancing student access to curriculum through interdisciplinary collaboration, diverse thought and multiple perspectives."

8. Goals of This Practice:

- 1.) Create an organizational structure that best supports teaching and learning.
- 2.) Establish conditions for success for ALL students at every school level.
- 3.) Create structures for teachers to collaborate and plan together at all levels.

9. Description of This Practice:

At the onset of the new Superintendent's tenure in Brockton, the Executive Team spent much time reflecting on the organizational structure that existed in the past and determined that it was insufficient to fully achieve the district mission. After careful reconsideration that continually focused on the goals of supporting teaching and learning, an updated structure was presented and approved by the School Committee, which allows Brockton to optimize resources for success and meet the needs of all students.

(Organizational chart attached as an implementation tool.) In addition to a revised organizational structure, the district formed an elementary taskforce to examine how the district organized elementary schools to see if they are organized as efficiently as

possible. This taskforce represented multiple constituencies from the elementary schools including professional staff, parents, central office personnel and a representative from the School Committee. The taskforce made a series of staffing and structural recommendations to the Superintendent and School Committee for staffing and bargaining considerations.

Two factors that determined the need to revise Brockton's structure and improve upon educating all students, was the increase in student population: an estimated 1,000 students over the last two years; and the loss of key administrative positions due to budget cuts in previous years. The Superintendent views this revised structure as a beginning and a rebuilding of the needed resources to effectively implement both the Common Core and the new Educator Evaluation system moving forward.

Specifically, to best achieve their focus on every child and ensure the proper resources are in place, Brockton's reorganization plan calls for the addition of a number of positions that have been lacking to best support the needs of an urban district as large as Brockton. These include:

Deputy Superintendent of Operations- Responsible for all Facilities and Technology

Deputy Superintendent of Learning & Teaching

K-5 Executive Director of Learning & Teaching (vs. K-8)

6-12 Executive Director of Learning & Teaching and Alternative Schools

Along with the existing high school structure, which has met with much success, these additional positions allow for improved vertical and horizontal articulation throughout the district.

For example, this structure will provide teachers who have a large number of ELL students in their classroom the long needed time, professional development and expertise to help students succeed. The teaching of literacy and writing has also shifted to a more holistic approach, which is now better coordinated at the district and building level. For instance, the additional positions will provide teachers at all levels, the additional resources to teach the basics of reading whether needed for elementary, middle or high school students.

In addition to enhancing the district's ability to articulate teaching and learning K through 12, a Grants and Development Office has been established to engage parents, community and businesses in generating grant monies to further support initiatives at the school and district level with the proper resources to educate every child.

The district has also been successful in creating pilot structures for common planning time for teachers to collaborate at all levels, which effectively works in tandem with district and building based professional development. While the actual structure to achieve this may vary by level, the overall goal of improving student performance remains the same. Examples include:

- At the elementary level, two schools were initially involved with the Center for Collaborative Education and Pearson to create common planning time, implemented within the umbrella of building Professional Learning Communities. School Leadership teams, Math and Literacy Coaches, the Union President and a cross section of grade level teachers were trained in all aspects of PLC's. Members of this group then became trainers at the building level and were instrumental in working with Principals to craft a schedule that allows for grade level meetings once a week for approximately 45 minutes. Not only is the collaborative work that takes place during this time student centered, but students are also engaged in enrichment activities in Art, Music and Physical Education while these meetings occur. Plans are currently underway to expand this common planning time model to more elementary schools.

- Associate Principals were hired at the middle schools whose main role is to facilitate common planning time for both department and grade level meetings on a daily basis. This structure allows teacher groups to collaborate and concentrate on building level needs and district initiatives, and has been a highly successful working model. Protocols used to focus common planning time meetings at both the middle and elementary schools are included as an implementation tool.

- Brockton High School utilizes house, department and faculty meetings to collaborate and focus on building and district professional development initiatives. For instance, when the focus of department meetings was on the district's writing initiative, all departments were involved, including the arts and physical education. In addition, the high school Restructuring Committee, made up of about 20 teachers from cross disciplines who apply to serve in this group, meet once a month on Saturdays. In the past, the group has reviewed the effectiveness of a number of initiatives including literacy and professional development, but the current focus is to work on a modified block schedule. Although the schedule is a contractual item that requires collective bargaining, this team is working to recommend improvements in areas impacted by the current schedule, including class size, additional time to collaborate and courses that best meet the needs of their diverse population of students. These discussions are currently underway among school committee members, administration and curriculum committees.

It is important to stress that while the focus of this promising practice is on organizational

structure, the executive team recognizes a synergy between this lever and the districts plans for professional development as this revised organizational structure provides many of the necessary resources for quality professional development to occur. Thus, the overall spirit of this reorganization is to provide more expertise in content and pedagogy at the classroom level to accomplish a primary district goal: provide the needed support for teachers and students for optimal performance. The district's other emphasis with this lever recognizes that the schedule can serve as a necessary but insufficient factor to achieve the improvements to learning and teaching the district seeks. Simply stated, without the time to meet and work collaboratively, the likelihood of improved practice is diminished. Having the schedule that permits this professional collaboration creates the environment where such change is possible if used effectively.

How This Practice Addresses Criteria for the School Structure Lever:

As detailed below, this promising practice exemplifies many of the criteria necessary for continual school improvement:

The superintendent at the district level and the principal at the school level ensure that the following are in place to support teaching and learning elements such as common formative assessment practices; well-articulated and aligned curricula; standards; adequate resources; adequate time to meet, collaborate and communicate; learner-centered schedules and communication protocols. Characteristics:
School day and school year calendars provide ample time for instruction and ample time for teachers to engage in ongoing professional growth with colleagues who share content and/or students.

District uses data in meaningful ways to help educators improve instruction.

Educators have access to clear, consistent, standards-based curriculum, pacing, guides, assessments, and materials.

10. How This Practice Was Implemented So It Was More Successful Than Others:

The commitment to be reflective and work towards a reorganizational plan that enhances vs. detracts from the existing scheduling structures at the elementary, middle and high school levels has enabled the district to better support teachers and students at all levels. Common planning time allows for more collaboration and focus on assessments, student data, adjusting instructional practices and implementing initiatives such as the district wide Writing Initiative or implementing specifics of school based School Improvement plans. Accountability for this time, achieved through the use of protocols, has also underscored the shared commitment and responsibility all teachers and administrators must have to reach all students. Protocols are also valuable and relevant take away tools for teachers to readily apply to their instruction.

Administration believes that the success in measured achievement for which Brockton High School has been recognized is directly related to the relentless focus on professional development. This focus has stemmed from the leadership of the High School Restructuring Committee, implemented by the collaborative efforts of all teachers, and consistently tied to their School Improvement Plan.

A shared vision and continual collaboration between teachers, Teacher Union leadership, administration and School Committee have been key contributors to the success of Brockton's organizational structure.

Intertwined with the day-to-day functioning of established structures, both internal and external Transition Teams have also been meeting to assist the new Superintendent in creating a Long Range Strategic Improvement Plan for Brockton Public Schools, which may have future implications for the existing organizational structure as well.

11. How This Practice Changed The District or School:

Brockton's various K-12 structures have increased the capacity for teachers and administrators to collaborate and function as stronger professional learning communities grounded in a more student-centered culture.

Middle Schools scores have gradually increased from being at the bottom in 2006 to the top in 2012 as compared to other urban districts. The district believes this is directly correlated to the excellent work the associate principals and teachers have done to improve their practice of teaching middle school students.

The successes achieved at the elementary and middle school levels have also resulted in a culture shift where teaching is no longer viewed as a private venture, but a collaborative process that allows teachers to share, learn from one another and focus on a shared responsibility for the academic success of every student.

The opportunity to extend learning time at one elementary school and build in common times for teachers to collaborate at all levels, has also empowered teachers and affirmed their ability and commitment to improve upon instructional practices.

Instructional decisions at the K-12 level are also more data driven than ever before, including a cultural shift that centers around less of what teachers like to do and more about what the data suggests needs to be done to differentiate instruction.

Recognition and support for needed additional resources on the part of administration and School Committee has built a stronger foundation of trust between teachers and administration and reinforced the district commitment to reach all students.

The process of reorganizing and enhancing the district resources has also revealed additional needs to be addressed in the near future, such as a Coordinator of Early Childhood and a Communications Department to best connect with families, especially English Language Learner families that may need to be supported in different ways to

contribute to the success of their child's education.

12. Resources (time, money, materials etc.) Required For Successful Implementation:

Budget allocations for professional development, additional positions, substitute teachers and outside resources.

Change in school schedule including an Extended Learning Time (ELT) school.

Grants from DESE

Planning time, Professional Development time

13. Tools You Used To Implement or Advance This Practice:

See separate attachments:

1. Brockton Public Schools-Organizational Chart