

VERNON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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TO: Richard Paskiewicz
FROM: Debbie Murasso
DATE: October 2009
RE: Monthly Report on Actions to Improve Student Achievement

There was no rest for the weary in the month of October regarding efforts to improve student achievement.

- On October 1st and then again on October 30th, members of the administrative team met with Ellen Cohn, CREC consultant and school practitioner whose research and experienced-based knowledge and expertise is helping to guide Vernon's implementation of **Scientific Research-Based Interventions**. At our most recent meeting, the importance of **quality, core instruction in Tier I** was discussed. At our next meeting, the group will examine the dynamics of **progress monitoring**.
- Having secured a successful \$58,930 grant from the **Connecticut Consortium on School Attendance**, the RHS Attendance Committee met on October 8th to monitor the implementation and progress made on those activities funded through the grant. Late in the month, in preparation for the fifth annual retreat of the Consortium, members were able to examine a history of our attendance data. Congratulations to all those (Eric Baim, Sue Andrews, Barry Grant, Jerry Griffin, Paul Smith, Diane Madore, and others) whose efforts these past years have resulted in **increases in the average daily attendance (ADA) of students and decreases in the percent of students who are chronically absent:**

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
Average Daily Attendance (ADA) of Students:	91.9	93.4	94.3	95.0
Percent of Students Attending Less Than 90%:	22.7	16.1	13.5	9.6

- On October 27-28, another group of Vernon educators and administrators participated in **Data Driven Decision Making/Data Team** training. This brings to over 240 the number of Vernon staff who have been trained in a collaborative protocol that (1) identifies methods of data collection and analysis that can immediately be applied to monitor and improve student achievement; and (2) presents a proven, effective six-step data-driven decision making process, which includes identifying what data to collect in light of antecedents of excellence and how to determine results.
- And, finally, beginning teachers and districts are in limbo no longer as the state legislature has approved the replacement of the BEST Program. The new **TEAM (Teacher Educator And Mentoring)** program is designed around five professional growth modules in order to provide a framework for the support of new teachers. These five modules are focused on

Amazingly, preparations for the next **NEASC (New England Association of Schools and Colleges) accreditation process** have begun at **Rockville High School**. And on October 27-28, a team of five (administrators and teachers) attended a two-day NEASC Accreditation Standards, Process, & Preparation Conference. Creating a “mental model” of the fit (the alignment) between NEASC, CALI, and the SIP and DIP has become a goal of administration and the high school department chairs... Monthly meetings with the Freshman Academy representatives continue as members share successes and problem solve challenges... As required by NCLB for schools identified as “In Need of Improvement – Year One,” work on the development/revision of the **School Improvement Plan (SIP)** continues. With a focus on the subgroup economically disadvantaged, data is being collected and strategies brainstormed to provide intervention (additional instructional support) for identified students... In support of student achievement, data teams have reported the following results:

- *The percent of technology education students scoring at/above proficient in **technical literacy** increased from 34% to 77% as measured by a common assessment administered on/by October 19, 2009.*
- *The percent of a “focused group of students” with **fewer than 2 absences in English** will increase from 88% to 100% as measured by each student’s period attendance history report collected on November 10, 2009.*
- *The percent of Algebra I students scoring at/above proficient in **CAPT percent problems** increased from 10% to 22% as measured by a common assessment administered on October 19, 2009.*
- *The percent of Chemistry students scoring at/above proficient in **measurement** increased from 3% to 63% as measured by a common assessment given on October 19, 2009.*
- *The percent of earth science students scoring at/above proficient in **converting between metric units** increased from 75% to 86% as measured by a common assessment administered on/by October 19, 2009.*
- *The percent of child development students scoring at/above proficient in **classifying** increased from 72% to 84% as measured by a common assessment administered on October 19, 2009.*
- *The percent of biology, marine science, and environmental science students scoring at/above proficient in **answering compare and contrast questions** increased from 34% to 70% as measured by a common assessment given on/by October 16, 2009.*
- *The percent of grade 10 English students scoring at/above proficient in **reading for information** increased from 70% to 84% as measured by a common assessment given by October 19, 2009.*
- *The percent of grade 11 and 12 English students scoring at/above proficient in **identifying thesis statements** increased from 30% to 57% as measured by a common assessment given by October 16, 2009.*
- *The percent of business education students scoring at/above proficient in **calculating average/mean** increased from 70% to 80% as measured by a common assessment.*

Following the September administration of **universal screenings** in grade 6, staff at **Vernon Center Middle School** have analyzed the results and have begun the implementation of **Tier 2 interventions** in reading and mathematics. Students are keeping track of their progress. Team math and reading teachers have met with administration and content specialists to discuss the

results and to begin conversations to improve **Tier 1 interventions**. Students who would benefit from short (4 weeks) daily intervention to tune up skills to meet or maintain academic content standards have been identified. This instruction will replace social studies for ½ marking period... In the month of October, VCMS teachers have volunteered to pilot the **Connecticut Benchmark Assessment System (CBAS)** in grades 7 and 8. This computer-based CSDE assessment program is designed to provide schools and districts with real-time feedback on the status of the attainment of students' skills and competencies. Assessments are administered three times a year... The **School Improvement Plan** is under review and development.... The 2010-11 budget is under construction. The challenge is to develop a reasonable budget that addresses the needs of students and the goals of the school improvement plan... In support of student achievement, data teams have reported the following results:

- *The percent of grade 7 students scoring at/above proficient in **making reader text connections** increased from 34% to 64% using marginal note-taking during reading as an instructional strategy.*
- *The percent of grade 6 students scoring at/above proficient in **ratios and proportions** increased from 57% to 66% by incorporating daily practice of writing ratios.*
- *The percent of grade 8 students who scored at/above proficient in **making reader text connections** with social studies text increased from 54% to 64% by familiarizing the students with the CMT answer stems.*
- *The percent of grade 7 students scoring at/above proficient in **adding fractions** increased from 41% to 55% as measured by a common assessment given on/by October 8, 2009.*

In conjunction with the **Positive Behavior Support (PBS)** initiative, the **focused monitoring team** continues to monitor discipline referrals and suspension data. The use of SWIS (School Wide Information System) for data tracking has served as a useful tool in determining the location, the time, and the names of the most frequent behavioral incidents and offenders.

Students receiving reading interventions based on **universal screening** data at **Maple Street School** have been through four rounds of **progress monitoring**. This data will now be analyzed, in conjunction with other data, to determine how much progress students have made. For those students who are not making sufficient progress, changes to interventions will be made... Intervention for kindergarten students has been altered so that targeted students are now receiving intervention one-on-one or in very small groups... The first individual meetings between the principal and all classroom teachers took place in October. Information about students' academic, social, and behavioral performance was reviewed. Recommendations for additional services and/or changes in services were discussed... The **Positive Behavior Support (PBS)** team has begun its bi-weekly meetings. Behavioral data for September and October will be analyzed at the first meeting in November...

- *The percent of grade 2 students scoring at/above proficient on a 2-digit addition pretest increased from 49% to 91%.*

At **Center Road School**, data teams developed and conducted their baseline data tests. From these results, teams identified their initial **SMART goals** for the year. For example,

- *The percent of grade 3 students scoring at/above proficient in **Reading – Strand C (self-to-text connections)** will increase from 15% to 20% as measured by a teacher created posttest given by November 16th.*
- *The percent of grade 5 students scoring at/above proficient in **Reading – Strand A (Forming a General Understanding)** will increase from 48% to 58% as measured by a teacher created posttest administered by November 13th.*
- *The percent of grade 3 students scoring at/above proficient in **Mathematics – Strand 25 (Integrated Understandings)** will increase from 33% to 43% as measured by a common assessment given on/by November 16th.*

All teachers have submitted their **Professional Growth Objectives (PGOs)**. Most teachers are working in teams on a common PGO that reflects the schoolwide goals and the grade level needs... The building level **SRBI committee**, working for a total of 10 hours to date, has developed procedures and forms to guide the teaching staff through the SRBI process. Teachers have been provided electronic copies of all materials. As part of SRBI, interventions have begun for all students identified by the **universal screenings** as needing support.

Data from **universal screenings** at **Lake Street School** helped identify all students currently performing below grade level expectations. This data was helpful in forming **Tier 2 intervention** groups for reading and mathematics... **Progress monitoring** occurs on a daily basis as student progress is tracked to inform instruction... Lake Street School teachers have completed "**Student Maps**" which include quarterly targets / goals for each student... In support of student achievement, data teams have reported their results on the **Data Team Tracking Form**. An example of the tool designed to capture the work of Vernon's data teams is attached.

Grades 3-5 classes at **Skinner Road School** are also participating in **Connecticut's Benchmark Assessment System (CBAS)** pilot. The CBAS is based on **Grade Level Expectations (GLEs)** in reading and math; results provide an accurate reflection of student progress toward the Connecticut Mastery Test. The results are instantly generated for all students completing the assessment and are aligned to what students should know and be able to do at designated points in the school year (fall, winter, spring)... Data teams report the following:

- *The percent of kindergarten students scoring at/above proficient in **character identification** increased from 41% to 95%.*
- *The percent of grade 1 students able to **describe a story character with two supporting details from the text** increased from 21% to 79%.*
- *The percent of grade 2 students scoring at/above proficient in **identifying the setting of a story** increased from 20% to 85%.*
- *The percent of grade 3 students able to **form a general understanding (Reading Comprehension Strand A)** increased from 75% to 77% at proficient and from 37% to 43% at goal.*
- *The percent of grade 4 students scoring at/above goal in **summarizing** increased from 24% to 50% as measured by a common assessment given by October 19th.*
- *The percent of grade 5 students scoring at/above proficient in **summarizing** increased from 66% to 95% as measured by a common assessment given by October 21, 2009.*

At **Northeast School**, Remedial Reading/Language Arts Specialist Richard O'Brian is spearheading a new initiative called **Parent University**. The Parent University program will be held in the evenings and parents who are interested to attend will learn how they can support their child in all areas of literacy. There will be a targeted focus for each evening's session and the University will run for 6-8 weeks. A questionnaire to solicit parent feedback on topics of interest is being distributed... Along with Lake Street School, the **Northeast School PBS Committee** attended its first two days of training in October. The PBS planning process has begun... This brings to four (MSS, VCMS, LSS, and NES) the number of Vernon schools that are in the planning and/or implementation phases of **Positive Behavior Supports (PBS)**.

At the district level, all members of the administrative team are working hard to improve teaching and learning:

- To support successful student transitions, staff is meeting to discuss **increased inclusion** of TALC students in Technology Education programs... **Family-Student-School Relations** have been enhanced through the provision of training initiatives designed to educate the parent as a consumer of services. The first program of the year held on October 9th focused on early identification and pursuit of support systems for students with disabilities...

Staff enjoyed a “full house” at the **Next STEP Open House** held on the evening of October 14th.

- The **School Wellness Council** met on October 20th to celebrate the past month’s achievement among the district’s schools. NES and SRS participated in the International Walk to School event. On November 21st, SRS will host the monthly **Town of Vernon Mayor’s Cup Fitness Challenge** with a family Turkey Trot, a 1.3 mile jog/walk through the Skinner Road School community. Center Road School continues participation in the Road Runner Jogging Club. In her “Tina Around Town” feature, Tina Martin from Channel 3 highlighted how health and wellness have affected the achievement of students at Skinner Road School.
- Toward the development of a **standards-based curriculum**, Health and Physical Education programs will have **common end-of-course assessments**. Using current event readings and **open-ended responses**, health education assessments will include a **“reading for information”** test item to support the district’s **SMART goal**. Teachers will provide **models of “proficient” responses**. At its most recent meeting, data teams developed the following SMART goals: (1) *The percent of grade 9 health students scoring at/above proficient in reading for information will increase from 88% to 94%;* (2) *The percent of grade 8 students meeting fitness standards (curl-ups, sit & reach, push-ups, and mile run) will increase from 29% to 39% as measured by a common assessment given on/by November 6th.*
- As a follow up to the **CIAC Athletic Program Evaluation**, Steve Phelps will establish an Athletic Advisory Committee to examine current recommendations for each of the five standards (guiding principles, curriculum, resources/equity, administration, and program and player evaluation).
- With an understanding of the State’s new **Curriculum Guide Checklist**, the Technology Education department developed new curriculum for Electronics I and Graphic Arts I and II that includes **essential questions, pacing guides, and a model unit**. With a goal toward **improved technological literacy**, *the percent of students scoring at/above proficient increased from 34% to 77% in October.*
- The Agriculture Education department is working on new marketing techniques and has developed a postcard that lists the program’s content and skills. Information, as well as a segment recently featured on Channel 3, can be viewed at www.rockvillehighschool.org.
- The first **RHS School-to-Business Partnership** meeting was held. The committee discussed developing a Mentorship Program and planning for a Ground Hog Day Shadowing Program. Since the beginning of the year (September and October) over 200 students have accessed the Career Center’s services: 48 for resumes, 23 for interest profiles, 33 for job shadowing, 38 for career research, etc.

Progress toward all three **SRBI (Scientific Research-Based Interventions)** goals continues:

1. **Deepen our District’s Understanding of SRBI/RTI:** In response to Ellen Cohn’s suggestions, the **Standard Protocol Tier II and Tier III Reading Interventions** document has been reorganized by area of academic weakness... The language and vocabulary of the SRBI framework continues to be embedded into all conversations and communications.
2. **Strengthen Core Instruction and Tier I Interventions:** Judy Latonie and Chris Ozmun facilitated a workshop with the RHS department heads to move forward with **standards-based common assessments... clear, purposeful common assessments will demand clear, purposeful core instruction.**
3. **Implement Universal Screenings in K-6 for Math and Reading:** Our **SRBI database** is up and running! Fall universal screening data has been loaded and the system’s ability to crunch numbers and run reports is being tested... We are beginning to add **progress monitoring data** to the SRBI database... Five elementary schools and VCMS grade 6 are

scheduling the January **universal screening sessions** and reflecting on lessons learned from the September screenings.

Recognitions

Congratulations to English department chair Vicki Nordlund for becoming a finalist in the New England Association of Teachers of English (NEATE) Poet-of-the-Year Contest.

Thank you, Tera Harlow, Kim Alzak, and Agricultural Education students, for representing RHS at the National FFA Convention in Indianapolis this month and for your presentation to the Board of Education.

To our VCMS CBAS pioneers – Cathy Earley, Maralee Parker, Pat LaPointe, Mike Savignano, Debbie Halpryn, Dianne Grimaldi, Al Lewis, and Diane Belli-Witek – thank you for your leap of faith! A special thank you to Technology Specialist Bill Valentine who made the leap possible and to Jerry Griffin who provided the nudge to take the leap!

Thank you Maple Street School educators, Kelly Browne, Julie Culos, Gayle Golas, and Linda Redekas, for your efforts to administer interventions, collect and graph progress monitoring data, and analyzing student progress.

Thank you Center Road School committee members, Andrea Bortolan, Deb Batchelder, Christine Piscitelli, Darby Schwartz, Emily Muro-Trexler, Chiara Bambara, Dave Pino, Mike DeBellis, and Regina Lee, for your efforts in creating the processes and procedures for managing the implementation of Scientific Research-based Interventions.

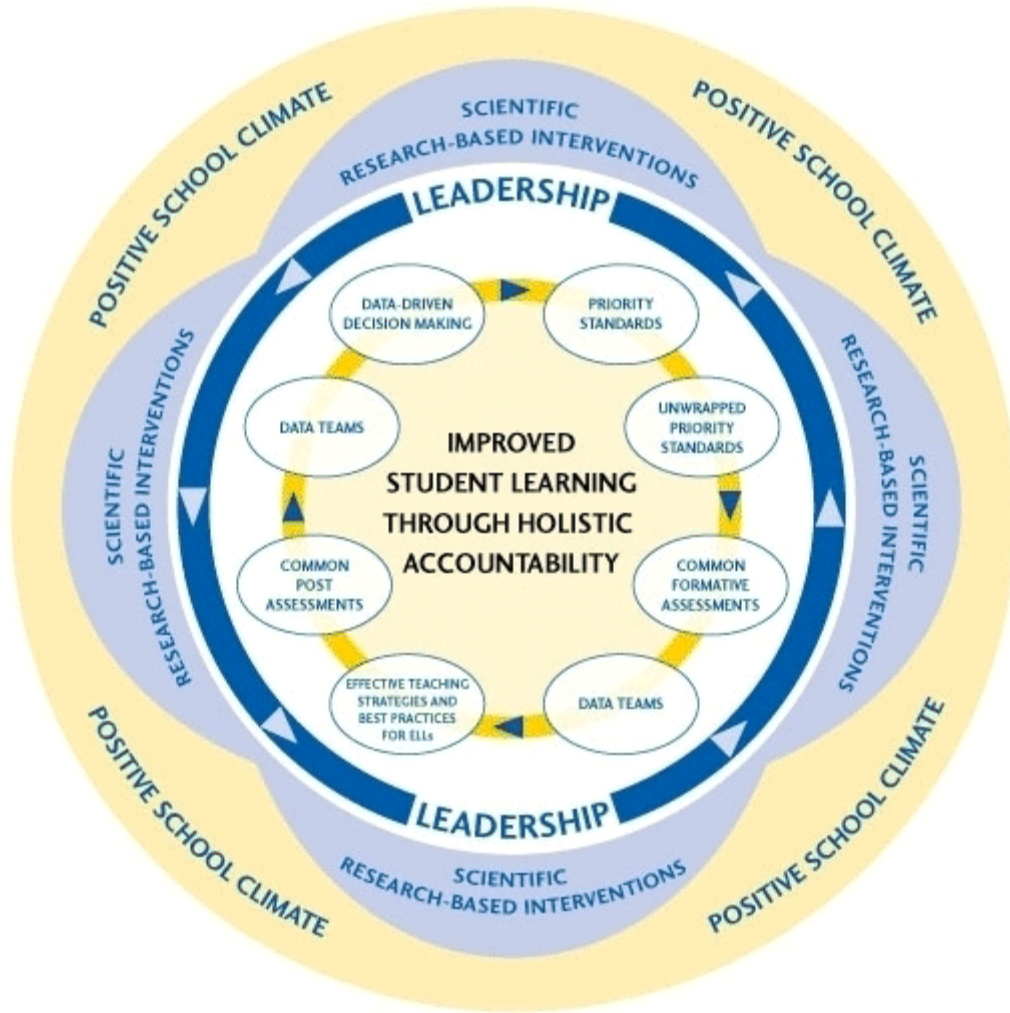
Thank you, Richard O'Brian and Janice Bouchard, for your efforts in supporting literacy at Northeast School.

Thank you, RHS Secretary Linda Loizides, for your support and assistance in orienting new secretarial staff to the Office of the Supervisor of Special Education, 6-12.

A job well done to our Art and Music staff as they come to meetings prepared with the necessary data and understanding of steps necessary to implement the Data Driven Decision Making / Data Team protocol.

Thank you, Barry Grant and Bill Valentine, for your efforts to get our SRBI database up and running and to establish computer access for our computer-based interventions at VCMS.

Connecticut's Accountability for Learning Initiative (CALI)



The best schools are those that never stop learning!