

# VERNON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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

**School and District Improvement:** To support improved student achievement and in compliance with federal legislation ***No Child Left Behind***, the administration and staff of the Vernon Public Schools have been working hard to address the consequences of our identification as a district and schools in “need of improvement.”

- 1. Develop or revise a two-year school improvement plan:** On November 30<sup>th</sup> all of our schools submitted their revised ***School Improvement/Instructional Plans (SIP)*** and on December 16<sup>th</sup>, the ***District Improvement Planning Committee (DIP)*** met to conduct a peer review of the plans from Maple Street, Northeast, Vernon Center Middle, and Rockville High Schools. The details of “*planning the work*” and “*working the plans*” are documented monthly in administrative reports to the Superintendent.
- 2. Provide Public School Choice:** Required of Title I schools identified as in “need of improvement,” the option to transfer to non-identified schools in the district and provide and pay for transportation within certain cost limits is being made available for a total of seventy students from Maple Street (61) and Northeast Schools (9). Based on a determination of schools eligible to accept transfers, twenty-six (26) students are now enrolled at Center Road and forty-four (44) at Lake Street School.
- 3. Provide Supplemental Educational Services:** In addition to Public School Choice transfers, a total of fifteen students from Maple Street School are participating in supplemental educational services (SES) outside of the school day by state-approved SES providers Sylvan Learning of Vernon and Professional Tutors of America.

**Scientific Research-Based Interventions:** On December 21<sup>st</sup>, administration met with CREC consultant Ellen Cohn (part of a thirty-hour series) to continue to grow and nurture our understanding and implementation of scientific research-based interventions (SRBI). Included in the discussion of non-negotiable components of SRBI were universal screenings, multiple tiers of increasingly intense interventions, scientific research-based interventions, progress monitoring of student performance, and fidelity of implementation.

**Teacher Educator and Mentoring (TEAM) Program:** At a meeting of the Teacher Induction Committee on December 15<sup>th</sup>, information about the new TEAM program was shared with Vernon’s new teachers and their mentors. District responsibilities to TEAM will include the following:

- Appointment of a TEAM District Facilitator by the Superintendent;
- Establishment of a district TEAM Coordinating Committee (TCC) for the purpose of developing a plan for the support of beginning teachers based on state guidelines;

- Assignment of the review of beginning teacher reflection papers to the TCC, a subset of the TCC or a regional review committee;
- Participation by Coordinating Committee members in training regarding the development of support plans and the review of beginning teacher reflection papers;
- Assignment of a trained mentor to each beginning teacher upon hire; and
- Notification to the state by the Superintendent of the beginning teacher's successful completion of each module and eligibility for the provisional educator certificate.

On December 3-4, 2009, members of the **Rockville High School Attendance Committee** attended the annual conference of the **Connecticut Consortium on School Attendance** and presented an update on the status of activities funded through the **Reaching Higher for Student Success Program**... The **Rockville TelegRAM** is now electronic and is available on the school website at [www.rockvillehighschool.org](http://www.rockvillehighschool.org)... In development is a series of afterschool **CAPT tutorial sessions** to support identified students at risk of achieving proficiency on the tenth grade CAPT... In preparation for the implementation of **Public Act 08-160, An Act Concerning School Learning Environment**, a committee has been assembled to explore "best practice" for **in-school suspension** programs... In development is the final copy of RHS's pre-self study report due to the **New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC)** by February 1<sup>st</sup>... Data teams report the following:

- *The percent of REACH students identifying themselves as **having an adult they can rely on** increased from 19% to 25% as measured by personal response solicited on/by December 7, 2009*
- *The percent of Physics students scoring at/above proficiency in **factor label unit conversion** increased from 35% to 94% as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 7, 2009.*
- *The percent of Food for Today students scoring at/above proficient in **halving and doubling whole numbers and fractions with kitchen math conversions** increased from 34% to 68% as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 7, 2009.*
- *The percent of earth science students scoring at/above proficient in **determining whether chemical bonds between atoms are ionic or covalent** increased from 44% to 73% as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 7, 2009*
- *The percent of biology, environmental science, and marine science students scoring at/above proficient in **graphing analysis** increased from 57% to 87% as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 7, 2009*
- *The percent of geometry students scoring at/above proficient in **Pythagorean Theorem and finding the hypotenuse** will increase from 10% to 80% as measured by a common assessment given on/by January 11, 2010.*
- *The percent of technology education students scoring at/above proficient in **technical literacy** increased from 18% to 88% as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 7, 2009.*

Based on peer review, the **Vernon Center Middle School Improvement Plan** was revised and will be presented to the Board of Education for its approval in January... The distribution of midterm reports has identified students in danger of failing and has operationalized the review and/or development of **student success plans**. Guided study halls and more frequent communication and collaboration with the home are just a few of the strategies being implemented to support student success...The **Focused Monitoring Data Team** continues to meet monthly to examine discipline referrals and suspension data. Recent findings are of concern as the percentage of special education students suspended has increased. To support efforts to meet the SMART goal to decrease from 23% to 12% the percent of special education students suspended, the team will seek the support of state consultant Dana Corriveau... Data teams report the following:

- The percent of grade 6 students scoring at/above proficient in **identifying science variables** increased from 67% to 74% as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 16, 2009
- The percent of grade 6 students scoring at/above proficient in **ratios and proportions** increased from 57% to 93% as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 16, 2009
- The percent of grade 8 students scoring at/above proficient in **reader-test connections** increased from 53% to 70% as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 16, 2009.
- The percent of grade 6 students scoring at/above proficient in **reader-text connections** increased from 51% to 56% as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 16, 2009.
- The percent of grade 7 students scoring at/above proficient in **simplifying fractions** increased from 41% to 82% as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 16, 2009.

Tier I core instruction at **Skinner Road School** is continuously being strengthened as teachers access all the components of the new **Treasures** program. Data teams continue to provide evidence of improved achievement:

- The percent of grade 1 students able to **sequence a story** increased from 79% to 100% at the proficient level and from 78% to 90% at the goal level as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 21, 2009.
- The percent of grade 2 students able to **rename an article/the story** increased from 8% to 79% at the proficient level and from 4% to 64% at the goal level.
- The percent of grade 4 students able to **make connections** increased from 40% to 63% at the proficient level and from 2% to 25% at the goal level as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 22, 2009.
- The percent of grade 5 students able to **identify simile (author's craft)** increased from 52% to 96% at the proficient level and from 22% to 85% at the goal level as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 21, 2009.

With only two data team cycles before the CMTs, all grade levels continue to work hard in reviewing the **CMT blueprint** to plan instruction on **concepts and skills** that have the greatest impact on student achievement... A book study of Ellen Cohn's **Response to Intervention** is being planned.

On December 3-4, 2009, teachers at **Lake Street School** conducted **report card conferences**. Teachers and parents sat down to review first quarter student progress... Students and staff also participated in another school wide community service project for the Cornerstone Foundation. The "Giving Tree" collected food, clothing, and monetary donations for the shelter. Many thanks to the generosity of the school community... Data teams report the following:

- The percent of grade K-1 students scoring at/above proficient in **identifying the setting of the story** increased from 84% to 87% as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 16, 2009.
- The percent of grade 2 students scoring at/above proficient in **identifying main idea** increased from 53% to 93% as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 15, 2009.
- The percent of grade 3 students scoring at/above proficient in **forming a general understanding** will increase from 44% to 80% as measured by a common assessment given on/by January 13, 2010.
- The percent of grade 5 students scoring at/above goal in **identifying main idea with supportive details** increased from 8% to 50% as measured by a common assessment.

The **Positive Behavioral Support (PBS)** team at **Maple Street School** held its first school-wide behavior reward in December. Students who met the **behavioral expectations** participated in a variety of special activities (dance, computer time, singing, volleyball, board games). Those students who did not adhere to behavioral expectations attended **re-teaching** sessions (either for the full time or part-time based on the number and type of behavioral incidents they experienced). Thirty-two (32) students participated in the full re-teaching; another sixteen (16) participated in the partial re-teaching session. The PBS team continues to meet bi-weekly. A check-in, check-out system will be started in January to provide some additional encouragement to students who, based on the data, repeatedly earn tallies for behavioral difficulties in the classroom... Students in grades 3-5 took a mathematics CMT-type assessment to determine their preparedness for taking the CMT in March. Results will be analyzed over the holiday break. Meetings with teachers will be scheduled the first week of January to **review the data and plan instruction**... MSS continues to explore options for **extending the kindergarten day** further for some who could benefit from additional academic support.

- *The percent of grade 5 students scoring at/above proficient in **writing** increased from 38% (October prompt) to 83% (December writing prompt).*
- *The percent of grade 3 students scoring at/above proficient in **writing** increased from 37% (October prompt) to 62% (December prompt.)*

**Data teams** at **Center Road School** continue to focus on the reading and math goals as outlined in the **School Instructional Plan**. Assessments are ongoing and students are achieving some promising results.

- *The percent of grade 1 students scoring at/above goal in **identifying setting** increased from 33% to 85% as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 16<sup>th</sup>.*
- *The percent of grade 5 students scoring at/above goal in **Strand B: Developing an Interpretation** increased from 47% to 96% as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 11, 2009.*
- *The percent of grade 2 students scoring at/above goal in **Strand 25: Integrated Understandings** increased from 0% to 11% as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 16<sup>th</sup>.*
- *The percent of grade 3 students scoring at/above goal in **Strand 25: Integrated Understandings** increased from 55% to 74% as measured by a common assessment given on/by December 14<sup>th</sup>.*

Student growth as evidenced by the data team results has been charted and is posted in the busy hallway leading to the first bridge. This display shows students that their data work is important... The school's focus on homework continues with some notable results. In grade 2, 88% of students brought their homework in every day for the month and in grade 4, 84% did so. In one classroom in grade 1 and in one classroom in grade 4, 100% of students completed and returned their homework this month... Teachers in grades 3-4-5 have initiated their CMT review schedule. They have gathered materials and planned activities such as superflex rotations.

At the district level, coordinators and supervisors continue their efforts to **improve teaching and learning**:

- *A **sequential curriculum and vertical teaming** were topics of discussion at the monthly Fine Arts department meeting... Preparation of student work for the Connecticut Scholastic Art Awards competition has begun. The Scholastic Art Awards of CT, an affiliate of the Alliance for Young Artists and Writers, is the only statewide visual arts competition for students in grades 7-12.*
- *The first in a series of three elementary **interactive whiteboard workshops** was held. Participants learned its effective use as an instructional tool... A **course articulation***

**agreement** has been completed with Manchester Community College for their video/filmmaking course (MCC COM 166) and our video production courses I and II... The results of the grade 3 **Otis Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT)** were reviewed at the December meeting of the ESP and will be distributed to parents with the January report card... The **School-to-Business Partnership** meeting was held on December 11<sup>th</sup>. Eight business partners, five school staff, and a board of education member finalized plans for a **Shadow Day** on February 18, 2010. Partners also discussed a framework for a **mentoring program** and designated staff will attend a State-sponsored mentoring program.

- On Saturday, December 5<sup>th</sup>, Judy Latonie attended the second event in the **SRBI Lecture Series** sponsored by the CT Reading Association. Teams of educators from Waterbury, Newtown, Cromwell, Bristol, and Berlin joined in a panel discussion entitled, **“What does SRBI look like in CT?”** and shared their successes and challenges... With feedback from Ellen Cohn, significant improvements to **Vernon’s Standard Protocol Interventions in Reading** document have been made. This is developing into a resource for classroom teachers that will identify the specific skills and strategies behind each area of reading (**phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension**) and will offer suggested intervention activities aimed at improving student performance in each area... **Winter Universal Screening** materials and schedules are in place. School wide assessment teams (SWAT) are being trained in data entry directly into our **SRBI database**.
- On December 1<sup>st</sup>, the **Elementary Mathematics Leadership Team** met to discuss **quarterly benchmarks, pacing guides, CMT review, and summer math packets**... And throughout the month of December teachers in grades K-5 were trained in the implementation of new **inquiry-based science units**: Grade K Wood and Paper; Grade 1 Balance and Motion; Grade 2 Solids and Liquids; Grade 3 Changes; and Grade 4 Motion and Design... With donations solicited by the air museum (and a special thank you to Rockville Bank), all grade 4 students visited the New England Air Museum as part of their **study of forces and motion**.
- Physical Education teachers at RHS have **targeted cardiovascular endurance as their SMART goal**. All students will jog 5 minutes at the beginning of each class in preparation for the mile run...The Health data team has **targeted summarizing and has developed a six-point rubric** to use when assessing student response.
- The **School Wellness Committee** met on December 15<sup>th</sup>. A draft of the **revised School Wellness Policy** has been prepared by Anne Fischer for committee review.
- All speech/language pathologists, occupational therapists, and physical therapists participated in training related to the **use of assistive technology services**. Missy Olsen from the Talcott Child Development Center provided the training... Together with EASTCONN Head Start, the Vernon Public Schools hosted a community luncheon for local agency representatives and discussed the possibility of developing a single point of entry for families inquiring about preschool... Preschool staff entered all of their classroom data into the **Connecticut Preschool Assessment Framework database**. This website allows teachers to plan instruction around assessment results specifically targeted to the standards. Data also allows teachers to identify which students require additional support and individualization.
- New curriculum for **Spanish/French IVB** and **Spanish/French Early College Experience (ECE)** was presented to and approved by the Board of Education... Proceeds from a **healthy fruit fundraiser** will be used to offset the costs of field trips... The **Discover Languages Committee** met to discuss plans for the annual **Taste of Languages** scheduled for February 24, 2010.

## Recognitions

*For their knowledge, creativity, and tremendous energy, we thank the K-12 music department members for outstanding student performances in the month of December.*

*Congratulations to Amy Matyseck and the Rockville High School Drama Club for their successful performance of **Harvey**.*

*Thanks and congratulations to Patty Bengston and Lori Gilmore for a successful Empty Bowls fundraiser.*

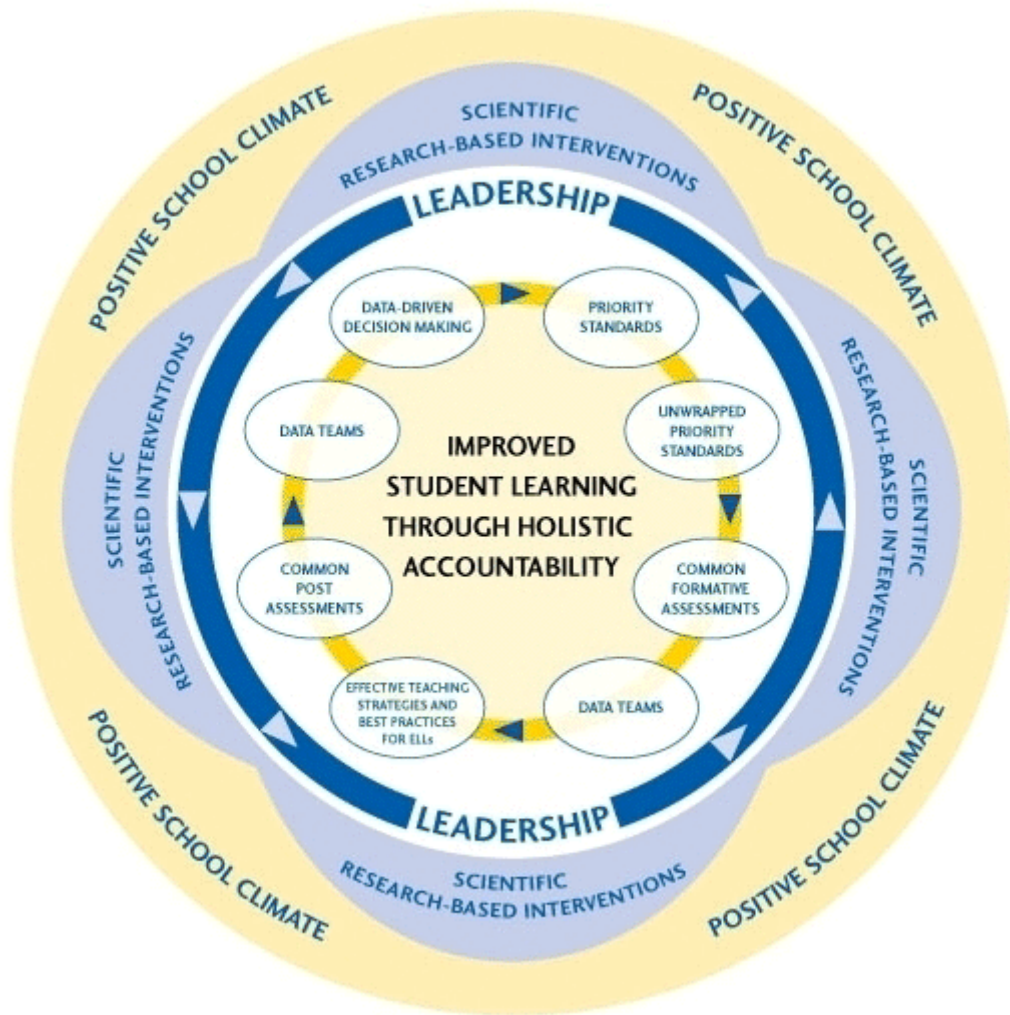
*Thank you SRS teacher Cheryl Spencer for sharing a modification to the data team tracking form to disaggregate data for those students scoring at/above proficient as well as for those scoring at/above goal.*

*Thank you elementary teachers for conducting report card conferences. Many positive comments were shared by parents pleased with the quality of education their children are receiving.*

*Congratulations to Mrs. Osorio, Mr. Ndao, Mrs. Ferres, and Mr. Lewis for presenting new curriculum to the BOE. Thank you, Mrs. Prattson, for spearheading a successful fruit fundraiser.*

*Congratulations and Happy Retirement to Center Road School Principal Mary Jo Myslinski.  
Thank you for all you've done to support teaching and learning!  
Thank you for being an exceptional school leader!*

**Connecticut's Accountability for Learning Initiative**



***The best schools are those that never stop learning!***