

BRISTOL BOROUGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

"A Vision for School Improvement"

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I. INTRODUCTION

"Good schools are in a continuing process of getting better." Dr. Vito Germinario

The content of this report is intended to review all aspects of on-going school processes and operations. To facilitate this review, two specific activities were undertaken. Structured interviews with representative members of the teaching staff, board of education, parents/citizens, district administration, and students (Appendix A provides examples of the type of questions utilized) were conducted. Also, a comprehensive review of district policies and procedures related to district curriculum, student achievement, instructional delivery systems, supervision of instruction, staff development, community relations, planning for school improvement, adequacy of school budget, utility of school facilities and federally mandated programs was undertaken.

The outcome of this school improvement audit is intended to analyze both process and product. It involves a systematic review of current conditions and a comparison to predetermined standards of "what should be."

Final recommendations relate to the extent by which the Bristol Borough School District maintains QUALITY CONTROL in the planning, implementation and evaluation of educational programs. Specifically, concepts related to Curriculum Management as it pertains to the quality and the interdependence of the district's WRITTEN, TAUGHT, and TESTED CURRICULUM were examined. Additionally, recommendations concerning the district budgetary processes, maintenance and improvement of school facilities and compliance with federal mandated programs will be presented.

This document included both curricular and generic school improvement issues. The standards utilized to formulate the analysis and subsequent recommendations include concepts not only related to curriculum management, but also to the general elements of effective schools. Operationally, these standards are embodied in the ongoing Effective School Research and the practices demonstrated in nationally recognized Blue Ribbon Schools of Excellence. When evaluating the provision of services to students with special needs both federal and state mandates and current "best practices" were used as the basis for analysis.

II. STANDARD FOR MEASUREMENT

Effective School Correlates

No single factor accounts for the development of successful schools. Yet, much research has been aimed at isolating those characteristics that facilitate student learning and school improvement. Effective school studies have been conducted for over thirty (30) years with a constantly evolving set of effective school correlates. Much research has identified operational characteristics that are present in the policies, practices and environments of effective schools:

1. *clear focus and mission* directing and unifying staff toward the primary goal for all students;
2. *appropriate opportunity for student learning and time on task* through the design and delivery of an aligned curriculum and instructional strategies that emphasize student engaged learning time;
3. *safe and orderly environment* including an environment which is conducive to good discipline where rules and procedures are well defined and where students actually help one another;
4. *climate of high expectation for success* for both staff and students where a commitment to well defined goals directs the school's resources and where beliefs and behaviors are aimed at successful achievement for all students;
5. *instructional leadership* to guide curriculum and instructional improvement characterized by behaviors directed toward instructional goals, motivation of

instructional improvement and provisions for opportunities for staff growth and disbursement of leadership throughout the staff;

6. *frequent monitoring of student progress* where a variety of evaluation methods are used that provide students feedback on learning and teachers feedback for modifying instruction;
7. *home-school relations* where the mission and instructional focus of the school is communicated to parents and the community, and where their support is elicited and their involvement encouraged.

For purposes of this school improvement audit, the following components have been added:

8. *budget analysis* to determine adequacy of resources and linkage to strategic and operational planning;
9. *school facilities* on-site review to ascertain the condition of the elementary/middle and high schools and its relationship to the long-range facilities plan;
10. *IDEA (PA School Code Chapter 14) and Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments (PA School Code Chapter 15)* to measure the effectiveness of the district's practices to meet state and federal requirements as they apply to students with disabilities/handicaps.

III. CURRENT CONDITION OF INTERNAL PRACTICES

What Is/Consideration for What Should Be

"If schools have any function, any justification, it is to prepare young people for the future. If it prepares them for the wrong future, it cripples them." Alvin Toffler

A careful review of current trends and practices within a school provides the basis for analyzing its strengths and weaknesses. Additionally, the discrepancy between the nature of current status (what is) and the standards established in both the Effective Schools and National Blue Ribbon School Program (what should be) provide the rationale for recommendations for school improvement.

Typically, there is not much difference between schools which have achieved recognition as national schools of excellence and those which seek to become recognized as one of America's best schools. Yet, a common element associated with the most successful schools is its commitment to system-wide planning and on-going dialogue related to school improvement. The following analysis will support that the Bristol Borough School District often lacks this quality.

1. CLEAR FOCUS AND MISSION - PLANNING PROCESSES

- a. Successful schools have long known the benefits of systematic planning.

These schools look upon planning as an organic, ongoing process not initiated by crisis or the need to institutionalize innovations. Instead, successful schools have developed a culture which initiates the planning

process by recognizing and accepting what is good, but are secure enough to create a level of dissatisfaction that essentially says "we can always do better."

The analysis indicates that planning processes within the Bristol Borough Schools are fragmented and lack a linkage to a district-wide mission. There is considerable autonomy among teachers to decide the focus and thrust of curriculum. While there is a mission statement, little evidence exists to substantiate the relationship between the mission statement and on-going practices.

As required by statute, goals and objectives are presented in the district policy manual. While administration had an excellent grasp of district goals, other groups interviewed had little knowledge about planning objectives.

This is not unusual. Many schools, like the Bristol Borough Schools, have been reasonably successful in providing education by depending on the skills and initiative of individual teachers and administrators. Unfortunately, such schools often do not fully capitalize on the benefits of systematic planning. To that end, systematic planning becomes a necessary consequence of external forces such as state mandates, federal requirements or state monitoring.

It is of utmost importance that the Bristol Borough School District engage the entire school community in the development of a clear understanding of the school's mission and, further, develop a vehicle to guide future decisions about the goals and operation of the school.

2. CURRICULUM MANAGEMENT

To maintain quality control in the development and delivery of curriculum, special emphasis must be given to the nature of and the interdependence of the written, taught and tested curriculum.

A. *Written Curriculum*: The current curriculum within the Bristol Borough Schools evolves around a five-year curriculum planning model. Interestingly, many (if not most) teachers are unaware of the existence of a curriculum planning/improvement cycle. Essentially, the curricula model is guided by the textbooks used and the individual priorities of a given teacher, at a given grade level. More often than not, these documents were created in relative isolation. Little time was given, thus little time was spent on both horizontal and vertical curriculum articulation. As in many districts, guides developed in this fashion serve limited purpose in providing meaningful instructional tools that maintain consistency and quality from teacher-to-teacher within a given grade level; or to ensure appropriate sequencing of student skills and proficiencies from grade level to grade level.

B. *Taught Curriculum*: Teachers in the Bristol Borough Schools are given considerable autonomy in the development and delivery of instructional strategies. Those interviewed consistently praised the skills and commitment of the teaching staff. With the absence of a district instructional model to ensure consistency of instructional delivery systems, the variance of this strength is, of course, teacher dependent. Additionally, evidence does not exist as to the frequency and utility of classroom observations and teacher evaluations. While

adequate forms exist, teachers (especially at the high school) have not had a classroom observation in years. Similarly, when conducted, little evidence exists as to their usefulness as a vehicle for improving instruction. However, it appears that all teachers receive a summary evaluation using the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Employee Evaluation Forms for Instructional Teachers.

C. *Tested Curriculum:* With the notable exception of state mandated testing, classroom assessments are undertaken in a manner consistent with institutionalized school practice; i.e. teachers are given autonomy in the construction of unit tests and assessment strategies. For example, several teachers have initiated non-traditional assessment strategies; yet, this promising practice is unique to those teachers who have a particular interest in its application. The cumulative impact of the lack of a conscientious effort to manage all aspects of the curricular/instructional program has, among other factors, led to student achievement levels significantly below standard averages for Scholastic Aptitude Tests, Advanced Placement Exams, and the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (Appendix B).

3. SAFE AND ORDERLY ENVIRONMENT

Much has been written concerning the relationship between the school environment and the academic and emotional well being of students. Establishing and maintaining an orderly school and classroom is a primary determinant of teaching and learning success. In America's best schools the vast majority of students learn and

prosper in a setting characterized by high expectations, success orientation, and nurturing support systems.

The students within the Bristol Borough School District are able to learn in a safe and orderly environment. With the exception of the occasional, typical adolescent pattern of misconduct, students are well behaved and respect their teachers and fellow students. Yet, a recurring theme, particularly in the elementary school, is that inconsistencies exist in the application of student consequences for inappropriate behaviors. While a discipline code exists, staff felt that it is not always followed.

America's best schools are often characterized as "friendly schools" where students thrive in an environment that values school spirit, student involvement in appropriate decision making, development of students' interest in learning, and that create opportunities for students to build sustained relations with their teachers and fellow students. To this end, successful schools have initiated school-wide climate initiatives. These programs emphasize the presence of certain desirable behaviors and promote a sense of belonging where students actually help one another. Evidence exists that these types of initiatives exist in the Bristol Borough School District. Unfortunately, they consist mainly of ad-hoc activities and the genuine caring attitude of the district's administration and staff.

4. CLIMATE OF HIGH EXPECTATIONS

The maintenance of high expectations for all students is a cornerstone of effective schools. Throughout the school day, students receive a steady stream of verbal and non-verbal messages regarding their ability to succeed. These behaviors

range from school-wide academic grouping patterns to the use of praise and encouragement from individual teachers. The students interviewed as part of this audit were bright, engaging and polite. They were quick to discuss what they thought was good and what they thought was not so good in their school. All the students were academic achievers and participated in a variety of co-curricular programs. They all expressed a sense of high expectations for their achievement. However, it became clear that the schools and staff often lack common vision, goals, or a sense of collective identity. Characterized as *conventional schools* (Germinario, 2000), they are physical sites where people work and see their own worth as what they do in the classroom. They work hard, derive satisfaction from their efforts, and adult and social interactions; but, most often fail to share a sense of common school goals and identity.

Schools, like most other organizations, never really remain the same. Instead, they are either declining or improving. If schools are to improve they are to become *collegial* (Germinario, 2000) in nature. That is, places where the professional staff derives the most satisfaction on the collective work (and achievements) on behalf of students. In collegial schools, the professional staff is constantly challenged to question what is right and what is wrong and engage in on-going, productive debate about how to improve their school. In short, educators spend considerable time discussing and making decisions about education.

5. INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

The literature on educational improvement is filled with calls for better and stronger leadership. Yet, a categorical model of effective school leadership still remains

elusive. To help focus the analysis of the Bristol Borough School District's emphasis on instructional leadership, we have chosen to utilize the following definition:

Leadership involves the direction (vision) of a school and then leading the school in that direction (strategy). It is the existence of this vision, out of which evolves strategy. This differentiates leadership from management. In America's best schools the responsibility for instructional leadership is viewed as dispersed among all adults within a school community. These schools recognize that effective schools capitalize on the expertise of many and not concentrate its focus on any single person.

The Bristol Borough schools have many ad-hoc leaders. Administrators, teachers and, at times, board members have initiated successful curricular and extra-curricular programs. Additionally, the professional staff has taken part in a variety of productive staff development programs. Yet, because of the lack of a district-wide mission, instructional improvement strategies are often diffused. Moreover, no clear mechanism has been established for ongoing dialogue among the school community for school improvement, curriculum development or staff development initiatives.

In many cases, instructional leadership is, at best, a "hit or miss" endeavor. This is not an indictment on any individual or administrator (or, for that fact, any other staff member). Each administrator brings a wide range of experiences and expertise in school operations. Additionally, each principal has been given multiple responsibilities (beyond the scope of the typical principal's job description) to improve curriculum and instruction while attempting to successfully administer the ongoing operations of their respective schools.

Nonetheless, a significant void exists in the district's ability to consistently focus on instructional and program improvement. To that end, a unified system for school, curriculum, and instructional improvement must be implemented. As importantly, administrators (or other designated personnel) must assume the role of "facilitator of the vision for school improvement."

6. FREQUENT MONITORING OF STUDENT PROGRESS

America's best schools recognize the importance of periodic evaluation of student progress as the basis for program refinements and change. To that end, standardized test data will continue to be an important component of this process. Yet, the emphasis will continue to shift away from norm-referenced paper and pencil tests and toward curricular-based, criterion-referenced measures of student mastery. During our brief visit to the Bristol Borough schools it was difficult to determine the extent by which school staff utilizes student achievement data for making important curricular decisions. Given the nature of the district's curriculum and the wide range of autonomy given to teachers, it would be safe to assume that moderate emphasis is placed on systematizing student achievement data to establish the parameters for program change.

7. HOME AND SCHOOL RELATIONS

The relationship between parents and school must be an authentic partnership. Consistently, research supports the importance of parent involvement in student achievement, student emotional well being and general support for the school. A

common strategy in America's best schools is to promote opportunities for meaningful involvement of all major stakeholders within the school community. The Bristol Borough School District is engaged in a variety of school-community activities. (Appendix C) Yet, little evidence exists to support the Bristol Borough schools' efforts to consistently engage citizens in school improvement activities. Specifically, in several school documents (including the district's Strategic Plan) initiatives are cited to facilitate home-school relations. Yet, little or no evidence exists to demonstrate follow-up in these areas. Most notably, all documents speak to a "community survey" aimed at gathering information from stakeholders regarding their perceptions of the school district. Sadly, as indicated in the Fall, 2009 Pennsylvania Department of Education: Academic Standards and Assessment Midpoint Review, no such survey has ever been implemented. Additionally, parents interviewed as part of this audit process uniformly agreed that a significant need exists to communicate with parents and to engage their interest and support in the education of their children.

It would seem most appropriate that a formal vehicle for meaningful parent/citizen participation be initiated. This participation should be ongoing and directed toward the development of a central school vision, goals, and guiding objectives. The operational, financial, and administrative aspects of school governance must continue to be the responsibility of the district's school board and administrators.

8. BUDGET

The fiscal management of the school district is and has been appropriately and consistently managed. The business office maintains proper record keeping and meets

acceptable accounting procedures for school districts. As outside resources and statewide aid diminish, the district is forced to rely on local taxes to make up the difference. Past boards over the last several years have dangerously depleted the district's reserve funds that will soon result in a \$0 fund balance. This current board must address the past decision to reduce the reserve and develop a systematic plan to meet the financial need of Bristol Borough for future years.

9. SCHOOL FACILITIES

The Synder-Girotti Elementary/Middle School is a state of the art facility that opened in September 2009 and houses Pre-Kindergarten to 8th grade. As in any new facility, the district staff and the architectural firms continue to address new construction issues. The old facility that still occupies the site is scheduled to be demolished and will become the school playground and ball fields.

The Bristol High School consists of the original building built in 1919, the main building built in 1960, and the new addition built in 1976. The facility provides, for the most part, an adequate environment for learning. There are specific areas in the school that require extensive maintenance - the boys and girls locker rooms, the lunchroom area, and the 2nd and 3rd floor of the old building to mention a few.

10. IDEA/504

For the 2009-10 school year, the Bristol Borough School District planned to implement several new strategies in an effort to improve the least restrictive environment (LRE) for the participation of classified students in the district. The

development of the Emotional Support and Autistic Support services stemmed from an effort by the Bristol Borough School District to decrease the number of students placed in alternative settings outside of the district and to increase opportunities for these students to attend their neighborhood school. The expansion of these services to include Emotional and Autistic Support programs, thereby expanding the district's capacity to refer fewer students to out-of-district placements, increase the continuum of services to existing students, and provide the least restrictive placement, has allowed the district to return these students to district, saving both tuition and transportation costs.

According to interviews with the Coordinator of Special Education, the district is making a concerted effort to support more special education students in the regular education environment by employing a more inclusive "*co-teaching*" model of instruction. Opportunities for co-teaching have been expanded in the Bristol Borough High School and the Synder-Girotti Elementary/Middle School. In addition, both regular education and special education teachers are being offered additional trainings, instructional materials, and instructional supplies in an effort to make the model a success.

Additional resource classes are being offered at the high school. The Coordinator of Special Education stated that this has allowed the team to consider an additional level of support when making placement decisions. In other words, a student who was not performing well in a regular education classroom with itinerant support would customarily be placed into a learning support classroom. The development of an additional level of support and offering more resource classrooms affords the possibility

of the student staying in the regular education classroom and receiving additional support in the resource room.

However, one of the previous resources for high school students was discontinued at the end of the 2008-09 school year. This program involved providing special needs students with individualized co-op programs so that the students could transition from high school into the world of work. As the IDEA mandates that districts provide "a coordinated set of services designed to move special education students successfully from school to post-school settings," the elimination of this program potentially places the school district in a non-compliant position.

In the area of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the recently enacted Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments, the district currently utilizes the process of identifying eligible students based on the presence of a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one of life's major activities. However, the process currently in place does not allow for a specific discussion regarding the degree to which the impairment, once identified, substantially limits one of life's major activities. Rather, it appears that the process simply assumes a substantial limitation once it is determined that the student has an impairment. Conducting 504 meetings using this process may be causing the district to over-identify students as being legally eligible for Section 504 plans, when in fact they do not meet the standard imposed by the law.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS/ACTION PLANS

In the previous section of this report, careful investigation and reflection was given to the current practices within the Bristol Borough School District and its relative position as to current research and successful practices. This section will be used to synthesize that information into specific recommendations. With the notable exception of *Strategic Planning*, these recommendations are not presented in order of importance. Thus, action plans that develop from this report should be based on needs and preferences of the major stakeholders in the Bristol Borough School District.

1. STRATEGIC PLANNING

The district must develop a clear vision of its unique purpose and the specific functions it hopes to perform. This statement should be operationalized into:

- *mission statement* - the keystone upon which the entire plan is built; provides focus for the district; represents the commitment of the district's resources to one purpose.
- *strategic policies* - clear statements that establish the parameters within which the district will accomplish its mission.
- *objectives* - the desired, measurable end result for the district .
- *action plans* - the explicit portion of a given strategy that outlines the tasks required to implement the objective, the person(s) responsible for each task, the due date for the completion of each task, and an analysis of the potential benefits and costs for the specific action plan.

It is highly recommended that the formulation of the mission statement and broad-base goals and objectives be developed by a representative ad-hoc committee of citizens, board members, administrators, teachers, and (when appropriate) students. This committee should formulate the strategic vision and provide one, three and five-year operational strategies for its implementation. All curriculum development, program initiatives and/or staff development activities must be linked to the plan. Additionally, the school board and administration must focus the district's budget and resources to the implementation of the plan.

2. SCHOOL-BASED PLANNING

To ensure the on-going utility of action plans, as well as provide a vehicle to monitor progress toward district/school goals, each school should initiate a school-based Improvement Council. Typically, such councils include the school principal, representative teachers from each grade level and/or subject areas, parents and, when appropriate, students.

3. CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT/MANAGEMENT

The Bristol Borough School District must develop an ongoing mechanism to review the appropriateness of what is taught, how it is taught and to what degree students are achieving established proficiencies.

A. it is recommended that PreK-12 subject advisory committees be used as a vehicle for curricular development and assessment. It is further recommended that these committees meet monthly with the major purpose to

ensure an articulated PreK-12 curriculum based on state standards and guided by current research related to teaching and learning (Appendix D).

B. the district should consider the development of a district instructional model to help establish standards and expectations for quality teaching. This model should be developed by teachers and administrators and be closely linked to the teacher effectiveness research (example provided in Appendix E).

C. classroom observations should then be linked to the instructional model. This will serve to promote professional dialogue about teaching as well as provide validity and reliability in the evaluation process.

D. both standardized testing and teacher assessments must be reviewed, updated and, most importantly, made congruent with the district's mission, objectives and curriculum. It is our informed opinion that the concepts stated above can best be implemented with the hiring of an administrative level professional whose primary duties are to ensure curriculum management (as discussed in terms of the written, taught and tested curricula).

Additionally, this person's duties might include:

Curriculum Development

- chair subject advisory committees
- prioritize curriculum revision projects
- monitor the writing of new curriculum/projects/programs

Staff Development

- unify activities toward strategic objectives
- assist in the development of a district instructional model

- conduct classroom observations (as directed by superintendent)

Testing

- chair testing committee
 - (1) choose new standardized test
 - (2) ensure curriculum match
 - (3) administer state-mandated test program

Grant Management

- Title I
- Block Grant
- Drug-Free Schools Act
- Competitive grants

Coordinate Gifted and Talented Program

- systematize identification procedures
- coordinate program development
- assist classroom teachers in differentiating for instruction
- coordinate special projects

Public/Community Relations

- coordinate dissemination of school news items to local newspapers
- coordinate development of district newsletter

In the event that budgetary constraints prohibit the establishment of a new administrative position, consideration may be given to re-examining the role and duties of each school principal. This includes, but is not limited to, the transferring of the elementary/middle principal to the high school, resulting in the

transfer of the high school principal to the elementary/middle school. The purpose of this discussion is prompted by the current responsibility for curriculum coordination by the high school principal. It would seem logical that the current high school principal was given the responsibility based on an acknowledgement of his perceived skills. Yet, given the complexities of the administration of a high school, it is also obvious that the importance of curriculum management has become, at best, a secondary function. Given the nature of administration in an elementary school and the support systems (e.g., assistant principal) that currently exist, more time may become available to devote to curriculum development and management.

4. INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP

Regardless of what vehicle the district chooses to develop and manage curriculum, it is critical that the staff members embrace their collective responsibilities as educational leaders. Realizing this need will have a positive impact on professional culture, expectations for high levels of achievement, monitoring of curricular programs and, most importantly, student learning. Additionally, establish regularly scheduled administrative meetings with specific agendas aimed at monitoring all areas of the district curriculum and operations.

5. HOME-SCHOOL RELATIONS

It is exceedingly important that the Bristol Borough School District develop within the community an ongoing communication system related to the operation of the

school district. It is equally important that the district capitalize on the expertise and interest of its citizens. As previously stated, it is important that representatives of the community participate in the development of the strategic vision, and serve on the ongoing school councils. Specially:

- A. the district must create, distribute and analyze a community survey as stated in the "Strategic Plan."
- B. as also stated in the "Strategic Plan," a district newsletter must be created and distributed to maintain on-going communication from district staff and board of education.
- C. as stated in the "Strategic Plan," a district brochure must be created and distributed.
- D. consideration must be given for all other non-implemented communication strategies stated in the district's "Strategic Plan."
- E. any communication strategy must be part of a systematically scheduled plan of meaningful communications throughout Bristol Borough.

6. Budget

- A. It is recommended that the district establish core assumptions prior to developing the district budget. (An example of budget assumptions is provided in Appendix F.)
- B. Review staff schedules at all grade levels to maximize the deployment of staff and maintain an adequate teacher to student ratio and reduce or eliminate positions wherever necessary.

7. Facilities

- A. Consider securing an engineer/architect to provide the district with a comprehensive plan to retrofit the high school building.
- B. Immediately move the staff and students from the 2nd and 3rd floors of the “old building” to the more recently constructed areas of the high school. The isolation of the staff and students does not ensure the welfare for all concerned.
- C. The district should consider exploring the privatization of bus services, cafeteria services and custodial/maintenance services.
- D. Develop and implement a comprehensive a long-range five year facilities plan that reflects replacement of equipment throughout the district, especially with respect to computers.
- E. Investigate the sharing of services with the government of the Borough of Bristol in the areas of snow removal and landscaping to name a few.

8. Special Programs

- A. When initially identifying students as potentially eligible for Special Education and Related Services, it is recommended that the Coordinator of Special Education review the pre-referral process that is in place. Pursuant to PA Code, Chapter 14, section 14.122, staff should examine to what extent research-based interventions truly exist for at-risk students, whether there are repeated assessments of achievement, conducted at reasonable intervals, which reflect formal monitoring of student progress during the interventions and how these interventions and progress are documented. Additionally, a staff survey should be implemented to identify common needs in order to match the identified needs with available resources for academic, social and emotional supports for students.

- B. When scheduling, identify the ratio for special education/general education classes, e.g. 1:3, 1:4, or one that mirrors the school population. Also, the district should identify co-teaching and inclusive environments, determine which model would be most effective for each student and provide for staff training.

Most importantly, examine class size relative to grade levels and consider reallocating staff, e.g., reducing class size at the primary grades, in order to better provide for pre-classification interventions.

A review of the data show that classified students at the high school level score well below the levels of classified students at the elementary/middle school on the PSSA. Therefore, when making personnel/staffing decisions, careful consideration must be given to assigning staff members to teach in high school-level content area classes. Having dual-certification, i.e., being certified in a high school level content area and special education would be most preferable.

- C. When examining instructional practices, begin by looking at the curriculum, assuring that it is the same one for all students. Additionally, the district should examine the following:

- a. Is there authentic assessment that informs the instruction?
- b. Do special education classes offer interventions that can be applied to the general education setting?
- c. Does the district ensure that the IEPs are standards-based?

Currently, the district is using Dibels and Edmark as a means of monitoring student progress. The district should consider implementing a benchmark and progress monitoring system based on direct, frequent and continuous student assessment. Available for purchase by the district are commercially-produced benchmark assessment programs, such as Pearson's AIMSweb or Schoolnet, Inc. The district should ensure that the results of these assessments are reported to students, parents, teachers and administrators. The results will enable the district to monitor not only for adequate yearly progress, but also to monitor at-risk students and to assist in writing individualized annual goals for classified students.

- D. In addition to implementing an assessment system to drive instruction, training should be given to the instructional staff in order to promote student

achievement. Models for the delivery of instruction to be considered by the district staff include methods based on the following works.

The Art and Science of Teaching; A Comprehensive Framework for Effective Instruction, Robert J. Marzano, (ASCD, 2007) and *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*, Robert J. Marzano, Debra J. Pickering & Jane E. Pollack (ASCD, 2001)

Collaborating with Students in Instruction and Decision Making, Richard Villa, Jacqueline Thousand & Ann Nevin (Corwin Press; 2010) and *Creating an Inclusive School*, Richard Villa and Jacqueline Thousand, (ASCD, 2005);

Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design: Connecting Content and Kids, Carol Ann Tomlinson & Jay McTighe, (ASCD, 2006); and,

Understanding by Design, Jay McTighe & Grant Wiggins, (ASCD, 2004).

In order to successfully implement programs that will address curricular, instructional and behavioral issues, there needs to be relevant and on-going professional development. The school district should utilize the services of the staff members of the Bucks County Intermediate Unit to provide this professional development, as they are familiar not only with the above-mentioned models, but also with the educational community.

- E. In *A Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, the federal government is now placing a greater emphasis on rigorous college- and career-ready standards and assessments aligned with these standards in instructional programs for all students. While both of these areas are important for all students, career-ready skills are essential for those severely disabled students for whom college may not be an appropriate transition plan. To that end, the district should consider re-establishing the specialized coop program for special education high school students that was discontinued at the end of the last school year.
- F. In reviewing the process and forms for Section 504 plans, the consultative team provided the Coordinator of Special Education with a process and form developed by Dr. Perry Zirkel, Professor of Education and Law, Lehigh University. The format proposed by Dr. Zirkel allows a school district's 504 team to determine, on a sliding scale, the extent to which the impairment limits a major life activity of the student, whether it be negligibly, mildly, moderately, substantially or extremely. Only when the impairment limits the major life activity substantially is the student eligible for a 504 plan. As Dr.

Zirkel has given approval for school districts to use his form, as long as there is an attribution to him on it, it is recommended that the district begin to use this process immediately.

V. Summary

We would like to thank the members of the Bristol Borough Board of Education, administration, staff, interested parents and students who helped provide valuable insight into the needs and expectations for their school. Further, we hope that the entire school community looks upon this document as a sincere effort aimed at benefiting the students in the district.

Lastly, we hope that all members of the school community embrace their collective roles and responsibilities to establish clear, measurable goals, systematize curriculum development and delivery, and engage the entire school community in its efforts to promote excellence.

VI. Appendices

Appendix A

BOARD MEMBERS

I. Planning - Prioritization of Goals

- How are the goals and priorities of the school determined?
- What role do you serve in this process?
- What goals/priorities do you (citizens) have for the school?

II. Curriculum Development Process

- How is curriculum developed in your school?
- What are your general impressions of curriculum in your school?
- What part of the budget is earmarked for curriculum development?
- What single change would you recommend for the improvement in the curriculum development process? in. School Improvement
- What vehicles are in place for ongoing school improvement?
- What role do you serve in the process?
- How do you involve parents, other citizens in the process?
- What part of your budget is routinely earmarked for school improvement?
- What do you consider the major educational challenges your school must face over the next five years?
- What single issue would you identify for the improvement of school/curriculum/students?

Appendix A (con't)

ADMINISTRATORS

I. Planning - Prioritization of Goals;

- How are the goals and priorities of the school determined?
- How are teachers, community, students involved in the establishment of the goals?
- What standards (if any) are utilized to guide the development of school goals and priorities?

II. Curriculum Development Process

- How is the need for curriculum change determined?
- How are staff members involved in the curriculum development process?
- What is your role in the curriculum development process?
- What single change would you recommend for improvement in the curriculum development process?

III. Teacher Observations/Evaluations

- How often do you formally observe/evaluate teachers?
- What criteria are used to maintain quality control in classroom instruction?
- How are teachers involved in the observation/evaluation process?
- How often do you informally observe teachers?
- What single change would you recommend for the improvement of the teacher observation/evaluation process?

Appendix A (con't)

IV. Curriculum/Student Evaluation

- What procedures do you use to evaluate your instructional programs?
- How do you utilize student achievement data in the planning for curriculum change?
- How does your school ensure the continuity of curricular content from grade to grade?
- What single change would you recommend for the improvement of the curriculum/student achievement process?

V. Staff Development

- How do you determine the goals and priorities of staff development?
- How are teachers/community/students involved in the creation of staff development goals/activities?
- How are the outcomes of staff development activities evaluated?
- What do you consider your single most important, staff development need?

VI. School Improvement

- What vehicles are in place for ongoing school improvement?
What role do you serve in the process?
- What do you consider the major educational challenge your school must face over the next five years?
- What single issue would you identify for the improvement of school/curricular/students?

Appendix A (con't)

TEACHERS

1. Curriculum Management

- How does your district manage curriculum, i.e., linkage between written, taught and tested curriculum?

A. Written Curriculum

- How is the need for curriculum change determined?
- How are staff members involved in the process?
 - What standards are involved in the determination of curriculum content?
 - How do you use curriculum guides in daily classroom instruction?
 - What are your general impressions of the curriculum development process in your school?
 - What single change would you recommend for improvement in the curriculum development process?

B. Taught Curriculum

- How do you ensure that you are addressing the proficiencies that are embodied in the curriculum?
- What instructional strategies are typically used in your classroom?
- How often are you formally observed?
- How often are you informally observed?
- What criteria are used to determine the effectiveness of classroom practices?

Appendix A (con't)

- What involvement have you had in the planning of staff development opportunities?
- What single change would you recommend for the improvement of instructional practices in your school?

C. Tested Curriculum

- What procedures do you use to evaluate your instructional programs?
- How does your school ensure the continuity of curriculum content from grade to grade?
- What vehicles (if any) are in place to review student achievement data?
- What single change would you recommend for the improvement of curriculum/student evaluation process?

II. School Improvement

- What kind of school improvement processes are in operation in your school?
- How are you involved in this process?
- What single issue would you identify for the improvement of school/curriculum/students?

Appendix A (con't)

PARENTS

I. Planning - Prioritization of Goals

- How are parents encouraged to be involved in school planning?

II. Curriculum Development

- How would you assess the nature of what is taught in your school?
- What single change would you recommend in what students should be taught?

III. School - Home Relations

- What strategies does the school use to communicate with parents?
- What strategies does the school use to encourage parents to provide a supportive learning environment in the home?
- How does the school support the needs of families?

IV. School Improvement

- Are you involved in your school's school improvement process?
- Are you involved more, less than you want to be?
- What single issue could you identify for the improvement of school/curriculum/students?

Appendix B

Analysis of Test Data (as reported from data in "Report Card on the Schools,"

The Philadelphia Inquirer, April 11, 2010)

An analysis of assessment data based on standardized test scores for the SAT and AP results indicate the following:

1. Combined SATs – average score for Bucks County: 1521
average score for Bristol Borough: 1326
2. The average number of AP courses offered in high schools in Bucks County is 13. The Bristol Borough School District offers 2. Of the 352 enrolled students in BBHS, only 7 students received a score of 3 or better on an AP exam.
3. On a statewide comparison of the Spring, 2009 PSSA for the Bristol Borough Junior/Senior High School, a study of the percentages of students Proficient and Advanced by subject for the school, the district and the state indicated:

Math - for the school 53.3%; for the district 72.8 %; for the state 73.4%
Reading - for the school 55.4%; for the district 64.6 %; for the state 71.3%
Science - for the school 22.5%; for the district 49.3 %; for the state 59.1%
Writing - for the school 85.9%; for the district 74.2%; for the state 70.9%

While the differences between the district percentage and the state percentage is not especially significant, particularly in the area of Writing where the district is above the state percentage, the discrepancies between the school level and the state level is extremely significant, again with the exception of Writing.

Partnerships and Collaborations

Amtrak and SEPTA – rail safety programs

Arkema – visiting scientist, Science Ambassadors to classrooms (collaborations)

BBE Foundation – foundation grant program for teachers

Bristol Borough Police – Safe School Efforts and DARE

Bristol Borough Volunteer Fire Department – fire prevention programs

Bristol Historical Society – donation of books and free tours

Bristol Riverside Theater – programs and student workshops

Bristol Rotary Association

Bristol Senior Athletic Association

Bucks County Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc.

Bucks County Family Services Assn. Student and family support services

Child Home and Community

Grundy Foundation

Grundy Library – Library education, support, after-school tutoring and summer programs, on-line research

Grundy Recreation Center- Ice skating lessons

Heart and Cancer Associations – assemblies

Kiwanis – food for families for holidays, donation of eyeglasses, scholarships

Latino Leadership Alliance – after school tutoring and Latino aid services

Lenape Foundation

Appendix C (con't)

Levittown Kiwanis

Lion's Association

Local Business – identifying requirements for entry level employment

NOVA – abuse prevention programs

Parent Advisory Council – participate in the planning of school-wide improvement program; student programs

Silver Lake Nature Center – Nature Center and on-site programs

Simon and Schuster – donate supplies for needy students

United Way of Bucks County – After School homework programs, summer programs, parenting programs, (collaboration w/YWCA and 21st Century Grant)

YMCA – Swimming programs, summer camp and after school day care, after school “Homework Zone”, summer programs (collaboration with United Way and 21st Century Grant)

Appendix D

To: Staff

From:

RE: Subject Advisory Committees

DATE: September

During the past five school years Subject Advisory Committees (SAC) have been actively involved in guiding curriculum development.

Each of these committees has an important agenda for this year. There will be scheduled meetings for all SAC's this year. Meetings will be on the fourth Thursday of each month. The meetings will be held from 3:30 to 4:20 p.m. The general purposes of Subject Advisory Committees are as follows:

A. (1) To review existing programs and to determine needs for:

Materials Equipment

Facilities Time Personnel Content

(2) Recommend actions to alleviate needs.

B. To assist in the formulation of K-12 objectives in the subject area.

C. To arrange for the study of promising new materials including author/publisher demonstrations.

D. To recommend adoption of programs and texts:

Recommendations for pilot programs - Recommendations for district-wide adoptions

E. To monitor and evaluate new materials and programs

F. To plan for and recommend in-service training and curriculum development

G. To evaluate program effectiveness

Appendix D (con't)

Memo To: Staff

It is important that there is broad representation on these committees; therefore, if you are interested in serving on a SAC, please complete the attached form. We also recognize that serving on a SAC places extra responsibility on staff and that circumstances and interests change; therefore, we ask current members of SAC's to indicate whether they wish to continue to serve in this capacity. Maximum membership on a SAC is three years, if someone else wants to serve. Staff members will only be able to serve on one SAC which meets on Thursdays.

In general, membership on a SAC will consist of 2 primary (grades K-2), 2 intermediate (grades 3-4), 2 middle school (grades 6-8) and 2 high school subject teachers, subject supervisors and administrative representation.

List of SACS:

Media	Health & Physical Education
Mathematics	Language Arts/Reading
Social Studies	Computer
Foreign Language	Family Life
Special Education	Science
Art/Music/Drama	Human Relations
Industrial Technology	Basic Skills
Student Assistance	Gifted & Talented
Cooperative/ Vocational	

Please return the attached form by:

Appendix E

District Instructional Model

TEACHING is both a SCIENCE and an ART. The science is characterized by a process of deliberate decision making and action that have both an empirical and common sense relationship to student learning. The art is the individual teacher's application of effective teaching behaviors based on best match of teaching styles, method, content, and students.

Class Climate: classes in which teachers make a conscientious effort to promote student emotional well being and self esteem. These classrooms are characterized by teacher behaviors that exhibit an enthusiastic commitment toward task, a success orientation, a high degree of active student participation and a positive feeling tone.

Classroom management: strategies that keep students engaged in meaningful activities that result in maximizing students' time-on-task and minimizing off-task inappropriate behaviors.

Planning: characterized by sequential lesson design utilization of a variety of active participation strategies, focused directions, appropriate guided and independent practice, and the maintenance of a constructivist perspective

Assessment: guided by the development of standard and authentic measurement of student proficiency as stated in the curriculum

Curriculum Management: a close adherence to the congruency of the written, taught and tested curriculum.

Appendix F

Budget Assumptions 2010-2011

Educational Program: To maintain the high quality of the current educational program and to provide for the improvement of program offerings in keeping with the district's Strategic and Five (5) Year Plans and School Based Initiatives.

Enrollments: Decreases projected at elementary, middle and high schools.

Classroom Needs: Classroom space to be available for all program offerings.

Staffing: Staff will be adjusted according to enrollment levels, class size policy, and program mandates, needs and initiatives.

Fund Balance: Maintain fund balance (percentage) of total general fund budget.

Revenues:

Federal Aid - federal aid expected to be constant, remaining approximately (percentage) of total budget.

State Aid: it is anticipated consistent with the state funding formula

Local – (percentage) rate of return on investment of idle funds.

State/Federal Mandates: Funds have been provided to accommodate non-educational health and safety mandates by the state and federal government.

Inflation: Most supply and equipment purchases will reflect a (percentage) inflationary increase. Utility and insurance costs will be based on quotations from industry sources. Health insurance premium rates will be adjusted accordingly.

Salaries: The bargaining groups have settled contracts, thus, the budget will include the negotiated increases for 2010-11

Appendix F (con't)

Building Level Allocations: Allocations per school, exclusive of salaries, will be established based on adjustments for inflation and changes in enrollments.

Furniture/Equipment Replacement Schedules: Each school will provide for scheduled furniture/equipment replacement

Equipment Purchases: All equipment, when feasible, shall be lease/purchased.

Maintenance: Continue maintenance of buildings at determined level of quality.

Transportation: Provide transportation service in accordance with established board policy, regulations, and practice.

High School Facility Needs: Funds to be provided for formal assessment of high school facility needs

Capital Outlay: Funds will be appropriated in accordance with modified Long Range Facilities Maintenance Plan.