

VERNON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of the Superintendent
30 Park Street • P.O. Box 600
Vernon, CT 06066-0600



Richard J. Paskiewicz
Superintendent of Schools
(860) 870-6000 ext. 124

Deborah Murasso
Assistant Superintendent of Schools
(860) 870-6000 ext. 143

TO: Richard Paskiewicz
FROM: Debbie Murasso
DATE: February 26, 2010
RE: Monthly Report on Actions to Improve Student Achievement

February always seems such a short month. So much to do... so little time.

In support of our district's goals aimed at deepening our understanding and implementation of **Scientific Research-Based Interventions (SRBI)**, the administrative team has been working hard to "make visible" the steps of our practices to date and to post in one location the documents and narrative that describe our efforts. Recognizing that this is a "work in progress," Vernon's "developing guide" to SRBI has been posted to our academic website (www.vernonschools.org). The developing guide includes an outline of developed and soon-to-be developed sections of a resource that all staff will be able to access. We're learning as we go!

Since the publication of the research on the "90/90/90 schools" ten years ago, current research continues to confirm and validate the practices and strategies that are needed to lead and sustain school improvement in times of change. What are the characteristics that describe high poverty, high minority, and high performing schools?

- ***A laser-like focus by everyone in the school and district on academic achievement and continuous improvement.***
- ***Clear curriculum choices that emphasize essential content.***
- ***Frequent formative assessments of student progress and multiple opportunities for improvement.***
- ***An emphasis on nonfiction writing across the subject areas.***
- ***Collaborative scoring of student work to determine a common agreement about what proficiency looks like.***
- ***The knowledge that good teachers/administrators matter most!***

In support of the development of highly qualified teachers, both the State and the district have been working to prepare for the launching of the **Teacher Education And Mentoring (TEAM)** program.

1. **Module Development:** The CSDE in collaboration with its partners are meeting to develop the five professional growth modules that will provide the context for beginning teachers. The modules are aligned to five of the domains of the **Common Core of Teaching (CCT)**: classroom environment, planning, teaching, assessing, and professional responsibility.

2. **TEAM Coordinating Committee (TCC):** Vernon's TCC has been identified and has participated in state-sponsored training to guide the planning, implementation, and monitoring of Vernon's program. One of the major responsibilities of this committee includes the completion of a three-year support plan for the district... due June 1, 2010.
3. **Mentor Training:** Mentor training opportunities are now available for previously trained (one-day update) as well as new mentors (three-day initial support training). Information regarding the recruitment of new Vernon mentors was distributed this month; applications will be accepted through March 17th.

At **Rockville High School**, a team of educators met with the Juvenile Probation Department to review the recent changes in the "FWSN" laws (Family With Service Needs). Improved understanding of the law and its administrative processes will assist RHS in the referral process... RHS and Central Office administration met to discuss progress made at the West Main Learning Center. The program has already resulted in success for students who need the extra help and direction and will be a significant factor in drop out prevention... To support the implementation of **SRBI (Scientific Research-based Interventions)**, **universal screenings** in reading will be administered in grades 9 and 10... An average of 21 grade 10 students participated in the after school CAPT tutorials (Thank you, Mike Maltese, for arranging this extra support for students. Thank you, Bob Keplesky, Sue Simmons, Erica Berg, and Katie Pitts, for facilitating the tutorials)... **Data teams** report the following SMART goal focus and results:

- *The percent of physics students scoring at/above proficient in **graphing** increased from 64% to 92% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 8, 2010.*
- *The percent of biology, environmental, and marine science students scoring at/above proficient in **CAPT/Validity** will increase from 58% to 68% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 26, 2010.*
- *The percent of child development students scoring at/above proficient in **categorizing developmental tasks** will increase from 10% to 90% as measured by a common assessment given on/by March 8, 2010.*
- *The percent of geometry students scoring at/above proficient in **calculating the percent of the area** will increase from 70% to 80% as measured by a common assessment given on/by March 8, 2010.*
- *The percent of grade 10 World History 3 students scoring at/above proficient in **reading a source document and writing a persuasive essay** increased from 69% to 85% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 8, 2010.*
- *The percent of grade 10 English students scoring at/above proficient in **reading for information** increased from 34% to 82% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 8, 2010.*

At **Vernon Center Middle School**, teachers and students focused on final preparation for the CMTs. Math and language arts teachers continued their pilot of the **CBAS (Connecticut Benchmark Assessment System)**. This pilot is particularly important for those students who will be completing the CMTs using the computer-based MIST portal... Administration completed the evaluation of non-tenured staff and will continue to guide their work on professional growth objectives. In mid-year evaluation conferences with their administrator, tenured staff also discussed and presented their progress on professional growth objectives (PGOs)... Grade 8 Algebra teachers met with RHS staff to ensure continuity in teaching and learning as students advance to the high school... In support of **PBS (Positive Behavior Supports)** implementation, VCMS recognized students with no office discipline issues for the second quarter by allowing them to participate in a reward activity and provided retraining in the SOAR values for those students who received office referrals. All students who successfully completed the retraining were given a "clean slate" for third quarter... **Data teams** report the following SMART goal focus and results:

- The percent of grade 7 math students scoring at/above proficient in **multiplication of fractions including simplifying** increased from 41% to 72% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 10, 2010.
- The percent of grade 7 social studies students scoring at/above proficient in **making reader text connections** increased from 69% to 83% as measured by a common assessment administered on/by February 5, 2010.
- The percent of grade 6 language arts students scoring at/above proficient in **making reader text connections** increased from 69% to 76% as measured by a common assessment given in February.
- The percent of grade 7 language arts students scoring at/above proficient in **inferencing** will increase from 79% to 85% as measured by a common assessment given on/by March 10, 2010.
- The percent of grade 6 math students scoring at/above proficient in **basic metric and customary conversions** increased from 65% to 67% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 10, 2010.
- The percent of grade 6 students scoring at/above proficient in **interpreting bar graphs** increased from 61% to 76% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 10, 2010.
- The percent of special education students **suspended (Focused Monitoring)** decreased from 23% to 22% as measured by analyzing the ISS and OSS reports from 2008-09 and 2009-10.
- The percent of grade 7 special education students scoring at/above proficient in **reader / text connections** increased from 8% to 45% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 17, 2010.
- The percent of grade 8 special education students scoring at/above proficient in **pictorial representation of numbers** increased from 55% to 75% as measured by a common assessment given/by February 10, 2010.

On February 26, 2010, the **Center Road School** community celebrated ‘Read Across America Day.’ The whole school gathered together for their monthly meeting and enjoyed listening to *The Cat in the Hat*. Throughout the day, classrooms enjoyed guest readers and visiting with their reading buddies across grade levels... Third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers prepared their students for the CMT. Through the use of the **data team process**, CMT strands that needed additional reinforcement were taught using **flexible groups**... The **SRBI committee** spent time organizing its **after-school tutoring program**. Based on the results of **universal screenings**, district assessments, and classroom performance, students in grades 1-5 were recommended to participate in the after school math academy. Students will meet with their tutor in small groups twice a week for 45 minutes. The focus will be on computation and problem solving strategies... **Data teams** report the following SMART goal focus and results:

- The percent of grade 1 students scoring at/above goal in **sequencing a story** increased from 84% to 93% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 12, 2010.
- The percent of grade 2 students scoring at/above goal in **Strand 25 Integrated Understandings** increased from 30% to 32% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 12, 2010.
- The percent of grade 4 students scoring at/above goal in **Strand D, Examining Content & Structure** increased from 46% to 79% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 12, 2010.
- The percent of grade 5 students scoring at/above goal in **Strand D, Examining Content & Structure** increased from 20% to 25% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 19, 2010.

At **Maple Street School** staff is exploring additional ways to address students' deficits in background knowledge and vocabulary. Several strategies have been discussed with a goal toward implementing some during the end of this school year and starting others at the beginning of the 2010-11 school year. Deficits in these areas create difficulties for students across all subject areas... Students are preparing projects for the upcoming Learning Fair to be held on March 26th.... **Data teams** report the following SMART goal focus and results:

- *The percent of grade 3 students scoring at/above proficient in **writing** increased from 37% in October to 62% in December.*
- *The percent of grade 5 students scoring at/above proficient in **writing** increased from 38% in October to 83% in December.*
- *Sixty-eight (68) percent of kindergarten students earned a score of 80 or higher on the 2nd quarter math benchmark assessment. Seventy percent (70) of kindergarten students earned a score of 70 or higher.*
- *Seventy-six (76) percent of grade 2 students earned a score of 80 or higher on the 2nd quarter math benchmark assessment. Seventy-nine (79) percent earned a score of 70 or higher.*
- *Students in the 2nd-3rd grade recess/lunch wave met their behavioral goal for the month of February.*

On February 3-4, 2010, **Lake Street School's Positive Behavior Support (PBS)** team attended training regarding this school wide initiative. This first year of training is designed to help the school establish clear school wide behavioral expectations, develop the lesson plans to teach those expectations, revise the behavior referral form, implement the use of the School Wide Information System (SWIS) database, design a system to reinforce the school's expectations, and participate in a school visit to a model PBS site. The team meets monthly to work toward a 2010-11 implementation... February also provided the opportunity to learn more about our district's **SRBI database**, specifically the tracking of **progress monitoring** data. Thank you, Judy Latonie, for teaching us how to enter progress monitoring data into the database... **Data teams** report the following SMART goal focus and results:

- *The percent of kindergarten students scoring at/above proficient in **identifying the main idea in a story** increased from 74% to 90% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 17, 2010.*
- *The percent of grade 3 students scoring at/above proficient in **forming a general understanding (Strand A5)** increased from 71% to 82% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 17, 2010.*
- *The percent of grade 4 students scoring at/above goal in **making text to self connections** increased from 52% to 57% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 10, 2010.*

Skinner Road School educators continued their book study of Ellen Cohn's **Response to Intervention: A Planning and Implementation Guide for School Practitioners**. With a focus on **Tier 1, Core Instruction**, staff reviewed the six key principles which can be considered "leverage points."

1. Expert knowledge of the standards for what students should know and be able to do at each and every grade level in each and every subject.
2. Intimate knowledge of the school's/district's current distance from the standards through observation, assessment, and data analysis.
3. Common, comprehensive, standards-driven curriculum for every subject.
4. A common assessment plan that provides valid and reliable data on student learning.
5. A set of standards for instructional excellence and research-based practices.

6. A team-based approach of studying student, classroom, school, and district data to guide decision making and to drive continuous improvement efforts.

Classroom teachers will continue to work with the reading consultants and numeracy teacher to gain a better understanding of SRBI, Tier II interventions, and the programs currently in place to provide services. Lexia continues to be added to the classroom level to provide for another level of Tier I instruction... **Data teams** report the following SMART goal focus and results:

- The percent of kindergarten students scoring at/above proficient in **identifying the story ending** increased from 74% to 86% as measured by a common assessment given on/by February 24, 2010.
- The percent of grade 1 students able to **state the main idea of a story and to make a text-to-self connection with at least one detail of support** increased from 0% to 80% at goal and from 0% to 97% at proficient.
- The percent of grade 2 students able to **interpret how a character feels** increased from 43% to 83% at goal and from 58% to 98% at proficient.
- The percent of grade 2 students able to **identify the main idea** increased from 24% to 72% at goal and from 81% to 94% at proficient.
- The percent of grade 3 students able to **form a general understanding, develop an interpretation, and examine content and structure** increased from 2% to 25% at goal and from 51% to 63% at proficient.

The **PBS (Positive Behavior Support)** team at **Northeast School** has finished developing its behavior flow chart (success)... In grade 1, the percent of students scoring at/above proficient in **reader/text and reader/self connections** increased from 57% to 83% (success)... In grade 2, the percent of students scoring at/above proficient in **identifying main idea and supportive detail** decreased from 72% to 67% (challenge)... All grade 2 classes received a complimentary letter from the manager after attending a field trip to a movie theatre. The letter stated how respectful the students were while at the theatre (success)... In grade 3, the percent of students at/above proficient in **creating subtraction number stories** increased from 61% to 95% (success)... In grade 4, the percent of students scoring at/above proficient in **estimation** increased from 56% to 84% (success)... Results of the **winter universal screening** revealed improved performance of students over fall data (success).

At the district level, program coordinators and supervisors document the following efforts to improve teaching and learning:

- A draft of Vernon's **"Developing Guide" to SRBI** has now been posted to the academic web server at www.vernonschools.org. Thank you to our administrative contributors for their collaboration on this project... The technical update to the **SRBI database** now allows us to graph our screening and progress monitoring data – a powerful visual tool to drive targeted instruction... Judy Latonie has met with all five elementary schools to train reading support staff on the use of the **progress monitoring** module... Students in grades 7-10 will be included in the **spring universal screening assessment** in reading comprehension. That data will be entered into our SRBI database... Guided by the **"Essential Elements of Curriculum"** template, small groups of teachers from the VCMS English and Social Studies department are developing **standard-based curriculum and assessment units**.
- At this month's **Fine Arts Department** Curriculum meeting, staff presented a brief summary of the work they have accomplished in the areas of **common assessment development, common instructional unit development, and scope and sequence**... Efforts have been made this year to raise awareness, promote and improve community participation in the Art Program's annual Student Art Exhibit at the Rockville Public

Library. Vernon administrators, Board of Education, Town Council members and State Representatives received an invitation to the reception and exhibit... Data teams report the following: *The percent of music students scoring at/above proficient in **understanding music vocabulary** increased as follows: in grade 5 from 37% to 93%; in grade 5 and 7 instrumental band from 70% to 83%; in grade 8 from 70% to 89%; and in grades 9-12 music theory and basic piano from 13% to 84%... The percent of art students scoring at/above proficient in **understanding art vocabulary** increased as follows: in grade 5 from 42% to 70%; in grade 7 from 12% to 78%; in Foundations of Art & Design from 36% to 62%; and in Photography I from 34% to 87%.*

- The Fifth Annual **Taste of Languages** was held at Rockville High School on Wednesday, February 24, 2010. Attended by over 200 people, participants enjoyed presentations of 19 languages, cultural foods, and entertainment. Representative Claire Janowski addressed the audience and presented the district with a citation from the General Assembly.
- On Thursday, February 11, 2010, Steve Phelps scheduled a meeting with members of the Vernon community athletic programs regarding the participation rate of students and youth playing sports in Vernon. To promote increased participation in athletics a suggestion was made to organize a "Vernon Youth Sports Organization" to bring all the programs from high school, parks & recreation, and independent leagues to work together. The organization would meet quarterly to discuss any number of shared issues... The K-12 Physical Education /Health data teams have been meeting monthly. With a focus on the **mile run** at RHS, **push ups** at VCMS, and a 10-minute **jogging challenge** at the elementary level, physical education teachers are working to promote increased levels of physical activity that will support student success on the Connecticut Fitness Test and lay a foundation for a healthy life style.
- A very successful **Ground Hog Shadowing day** was held at RHS on February 18, 2010. Eighty-three students participated in shadowing activities at 65 places of work. Additional shadowing opportunities and even internships have resulted for some students. The program also fosters business and community support for RHS and education... The business department is starting to write a Personal Finance curriculum. The curriculum will use a standards-based format... The Technology Department has been thinking through a new course, Pre-Engineering. They have decided on specific content for the course and will start designing essential questions.
- High school and central office administration met to review the present attendance grant's implementation and to develop a new grant proposal. The new grant proposal will focus on parent communication and will include a partnership with the local justice system as well.

Recognitions

With gratitude to Sandy Conner, Administrative Assistant, for her skill in developing our district and academic web servers.

Thank you, Judy Latonie, for facilitating the development of our "developing guide" to SRBI.

Congratulations to Jaya Vijayasekar, Alba Osorio, and the entire World Language department on a successful 2010 Taste of Languages!

To every staff member of the VCMS community who stepped up with outrageous creativity to assemble the prizes and gift baskets for CMT and PBS incentives.

Thank you to all of our staff for helping to prepare students for success on the State's academic content standards as measured by the Connecticut Mastery Test / Connecticut Academic Performance Test.

Thank you, Richard O'Brian, Janice Bouchard, Phyllis Winkler, Barbara McNamar, Sue Vaillancourt, Diane Lux, Debbie Luniewsky, Jenna Guerette, Kristen Chepeleff, Pam Hoyt, Jan Cribben, Carol Baldwin, and Ellen Burke, for volunteering your evening time to help with Northeast School's First Parent Academy.

Special thanks to Richard and Janice for organizing and planning the event!

Thank you to Mike Savignano, Maralee Parker, and Keith Miller at VCMS for their expertise and enthusiasm as we expand our use of technology and embed its use across the curriculum in an authentic way that actively engages students!

Congratulations to the Vernon Visual Arts staff for their tireless efforts, knowledge, and creativity in instruction and preparation of student work. They have created a most outstanding and extensive exhibit of art works from grades 1-12.

Thank you, Becky Brodersen, for organizing a successful job shadowing day!

