

NEBRASKA CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT EXTERNAL REPORT

(Revised, July, 2022)



Prepared For:	Syracuse Dunbar Avoca Public School
Head Administrator:	David Kraus
Dates of Visit:	March 27-28, 2023



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Introduction and Purpose of the Visit

92 NAC 10 “Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Nebraska Schools”

Section 009 of Rule 10 describes Continuous Improvement as, “A systematic on-going process guides planning, implementation, and evaluation and renewal of continuous school improvement activities to meet local and statewide goals and priorities. The school improvement process focuses on improving student learning. The process includes a periodic review by visiting educators who provide consultation to the local school/community in continued accomplishment of plans and goals.”

The purpose of the External Visit is to review the documentation and efforts for continuous improvement by the school system and to affirm compliance with Section 009 of Rule 10. External Visits serve to also provide meaningful feedback that can be used to continue improvement goals. In Nebraska, a network of professional peers volunteer to serve on External Teams. Prior to the visit team members verse themselves on best practices and data literacy for Continuous Improvement.

The previous visit to Syracuse Dunbar Avoca Public Schools was conducted in 2018. At this time the district was accredited through AdvancED. Opportunities for Improvement included:

- Develop and consistently implement an instructional process that includes and promotes creativity, innovation, and collaborative problem-solving.
- Implement a process in which instruction is monitored and adjusted to meet individual learners' needs and the institution's learning expectations.
- Implement an induction and mentoring program for new teachers and create a Mentoring Handbook.

Improvement priorities from the visit included:

- Develop and implement a plan to integrate digital resources into teaching, learning, and operations to improve professional practice, student performance, and organizational effectiveness.
- Demonstrate strategic resource management by formulating a

long-range strategic plan, including resource management of budgets, facilities, and other organizational needs in support of the institution's purpose and direction.

The evidence for the on-site review was organized by the CIP Leadership Team, Steering Committee, and district administration. Syracuse Dunbar Avoca Public Schools provided access to Google folders with evidence to support the district's continuous improvement process and goals. These resources provided valuable information for the visit. The School Profile included all the evidence the External Team needed to determine if Syracuse Dunbar Avoca Public Schools had evidence regarding their progress on the Continuous Improvement Process (CIP) goals. Before the visit members of the External Team reviewed the Action Plans and School Profile and met for an orientation of expectations on March 20, 2023.

The team had dinner with administrators and chairmen of the CIP, allowing them to meet and get to know each other.

On the first full day of the visit, the team received a presentation about SDA and its data, which was impressive. We then went on student-led tours, which gave us an opportunity to see the school from the perspective of its students. During this day, we also conducted interviews with various stakeholders, including parents and community members, SMS/SHS teachers, and students.

On the second day, the team had the opportunity to interview the administrative team, classified staff, and the board of education. These interviews provided a more in-depth understanding of how the school operates at all levels.

Finally, the external team shared their findings and conclusions with the administrative team and presented an oral exit report to staff, students, and community members. A thorough and comprehensive assessment of the school was conducted, and the visit provided valuable insights for everyone involved.

External Visitation Team

The responsibilities of the External Team include:

- 1) Review school system evidence of Continuous Improvement.
- 2) Observe educational services provided by the school system.

- 3) Assess the progress and effectiveness of the Action Plan.
- 4) Provide feedback for continued improvement.

Peer review is a common strategy for supporting school and teacher improvement. Research suggests the potential value in peer review as a part of larger school improvement initiatives. Of particular note, some suggest that peer reviews may reduce “top-down” accountability mindsets and generate greater practitioner-driven innovations. Several states utilize peer review as part of their larger school quality, accountability, or accreditation processes, though peer review is rarely linked to a broader CI process. *(Data Literacy Workbook, Hanover Research, February 2022)*

Serving as an External Visit volunteer is an important responsibility. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) appreciates the leadership skills and peer collegiality of educators throughout the state that volunteer for this role.

External Team Roster

	Name	Position Phone Email
Team Leader	Jackie Ediger	Director of Professional Learning

Member	Shannon Nepple	Adams Central Curriculum Director and former Kdgn teacher S
Member	Suzanne Whisler	Auburn Curriculum Director
Member	Nicole Teten	NE City Middle School ELA Teacher
Member	Ann Foster	Lexington NeMTSS, CIP Facilitator and Teaching & Learning Coordinator

Agenda

The On-Site Visit was scheduled for **March 27-28, 2023**. The External Team participated in an Orientation Meeting prior to the visit to discuss responsibilities and to plan for the review of the Action Plan and School Profile.

Sunday, March 26, 2023

5:00 p.m.	External Team Members Meet
7:00 p.m.	Team Dinner at FireWorks Restaurant - 5750 South 86th Street, Lincoln - Hearth Room - with External Team and Syracuse CIP Team

Visit Day 1 - Monday, March 27, 2023

7:45-8:30 a.m.	Arrival of External Team Members - Breakfast - HS Conference Room <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome by Julie and Sallie, CIP Chairs• External Team Orientation
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8:30-9:00 a.m.	Steering Committee Presentation
9:15-9:45 a.m.	Syracuse Elementary Tour - Mr. Kraus/Mr. Moore - Reese Tuxhorn and Breckin Hein (Sallie drives the team in Van to Elementary)
9:45-10:30 a.m.	Interviews - ELEM Teachers and Students <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Elementary Conference Room

10:45-11:45 a.m.	SHS Building Tour - Students - Will Janssen and Rylee Seelhoff SMS Building Tour - Mr. Farley - Ava Mohr and Brock Goebel
11:45 -12:10 p.m.	Work Time for Team
12:10-12:45 p.m.	Lunch in the Cafeteria
1:00-3:00 p.m.	Interviews - SMS/SHS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Parents & Community 12:45-1:30 - HS Library ● SMS/SHS Teachers 1:30-2:15 - HS Library ● SMS/SHS Students 2:30-3:00 - HS Library

3:00-6:00 p.m. Work Time for Team

Visit Day 2 - Tuesday, March 28, 2023

7:45-8:30 a.m.	Arrival of External Team Members & Continental Breakfast - HS Conference Room Work Time for Team
8:30-9:15 a.m.	Administrative Team Interview - HS Library
9:30-10:15 a.m.	Classified Staff Interview - HS Library
10:15-11:00	Board of Education Interview - HS Library
11:00-12:00 p.m.	Work Time for Team

12:00-12:45 p.m. External Team Lunch -Team Work Time

12:45-2:30 p.m.	External work Time <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Request follow up interviews or additional information as needed
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2:30-3:15 p.m.	External Team Chair meets with CIP Co-Chairs and Administrative Team - HS Library External Team continues work in Room
3:15-3:45 p.m.	Prepare for Oral Exit Report
3:45 p.m.	Oral Exit Report - Middle School Cafeteria

Review of Continuous Improvement

NAC 92 Chapter 10
009.01A The school system develops and implements a continuous school improvement process to promote quality learning for all students. This process includes procedures and strategies to address quality learning, equity, and accountability.

The **Syracuse Dunbar Avoca Public Schools** Continuous Improvement Process consists of strategic planning (2022), committee representation, data digs, service plans, implementation and evaluation in accordance with standards of professional learning. The Steering Committee is responsible for monitoring the Continuous Improvement Process. The Steering Committee met consistently guided by an agenda.

009.01A1 Review and update of the mission and vision statements.

Mission: We provide a safe, secure environment in which every student will acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to become accomplished, productive members of the ever-changing global community
The Mission and Vision of Syracuse Public Schools has not been updated in the last three continuous improvement cycles. It was recommended to the administrative team to start the next cycle by bringing in persons representing all stakeholders to develop a new mission and vision statement.

009.01A2 Collection and analysis of data about student performance, demographics, learning climate, and former high school students.

The opening presentation provided a snapshot of the district, their strategic plan and steps made toward achieving their goals, and details about its NeMTSS process.

The snapshot included a list of staff, photos of facilities, and demographic information. In their strategic plan they included Action Plans for grades PK-3, and 9-12. Grades 4-12 focused on a reading comprehension goal, specifically in the area of "Literary Text: Theme and Analysis." Strategy and interventions included a data review, selecting and implementing a new Instructional Model, and continuing to pre, mid, and post-test their students in vocabulary. Teachers attended in-service training in 2020, 2022, and 2023 that focused on data review, Marzano's instructional model, and text analysis.

The K-3 building focused on a math goal, especially in the area of computation skills. The strategies and interventions included for the PK-3 goal were the same as the Literacy goal. Teachers attended training focused on data review in 2022 and 2023. They also attended an in-service focused on the Marzano instructional model.

Demographic data included enrollment numbers, participation data, student population breakdown and demographic data, and teacher data (percent with master's and average years of teaching experience). Data sources included MAP Growth, NSCAS, ACT, Pre-ACT, and Acadience Reading. A list of programs, stakeholders, and extracurricular activities was shared. The NeMTSS process at the elementary, middle, and high schools is relatively new. It began at the middle school, in the winter of 2019. They developed decision rules for determining student participation in tiered interventions. By fall, staff had begun implementing interventions. A behavior committee was established in 2021. They received feedback on the process, then kicked off the 2022-23 school year with a school-wide ticket system and sensory room.

At the elementary school, MTSS began in the 2019-2020 school year. They also drafted decision rules and implemented interventions by the fall of 2019. A behavior committee was developed in 2022. For the 2023-24 school year, the school will implement a school-wide positive behavior system at Tier 1 and their Social Emotional curriculum, Move this World.

MTSS at the high school began in the fall of 2021. A flow chart, and Check-In/Check-Out system, and matrix was developed. The matrix allows the team and teachers to better identify students.

In 2018, Syracuse was recognized for three powerful practices. They implement, evaluate, and monitor processes to identify and address the specialized social, emotional, development and academic needs of students. Leaders implement a strong operational process and procedures to ensure organizational effectiveness in support of teaching and learning.

Three opportunities for improvement were identified. The district was encouraged to develop and consistently implement an instructional process that includes and promotes creativity, innovation, and collaborative problem solving. Another suggest was to implement a process in which instruction is monitored and adjusted to meet individual learner's needs and the institution's learning expectations. The last suggestion was to implement an induction and mentoring program for new teachers and create a Mentoring Handbook.

<p>009.01A3 Selection of improvement goals. At least one goal is directed toward improving student academic achievement</p>
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The **Syracuse** Continuous Improvement Process consists of

- Syracuse High School, grades 9-12, will focus on improving our students' reading comprehension skills, specifically in the area of Literary Text: Theme and Analysis.

- Syracuse Middle School, grades 4-8, will focus on Improving students' reading comprehension skills, specifically in the area of Literary Text: Theme and Analysis.
- Syracuse Elementary School, grades K-3, will focus on improving students' mathematics number sense, specifically in the area of computation skills.

009.01A4 Development and implementation of an improvement plan which includes procedures, strategies, actions to achieve goals, and an aligned professional development plan.

009.01A5 Evaluation of progress toward improvement goals.

Commendations:

- SDA has a belief that every student can learn.
- There is an ongoing systematic CIP led process.
- SDA has teacher leaders at every level.
- Collaboration among teachers is evident at every level.
- Dedication and commitment of staff to student learning.
- SDA has strong perception data.
- The community strongly supports the school district.
- There is a strong sense of family, community, student-focused engagement, and collaboration in the school.
- There are many opportunities for students to participate in activities ●
- There are strong relationships between staff, students and stakeholders.
- Syracuse has a systematic process for analyzing the data and involving all staff. Both goals were driven by data and monitored.
- The sensory room provides a safe calming environment for students.

Recommendations:

1. Revise the mission and vision statement including all stakeholders.
2. Conduct a district-wide data retreat to determine your next CIP goals. Goals should be clear and measurable with specific action steps.
3. Assign clear roles and responsibilities among the leadership team including a district lead to support the CIP leadership team, a district lead to support the district MTSS

lead, and a full-time curriculum director as defined in your strategic plan.

4. Consider making time for weekly or biweekly leadership team meetings to increase communication across the district and establish cohesive decision-making processes.

Summary

Next Steps:

SCHOOL-WIDE EFFORTS:

1. Revise Mission & Vision

A strong mission and vision statement should not only inspire but also provide a roadmap for what comes next.

2. Analyze district-wide data to determine if you continue with current goals or establish new goals for continuous improvement.

3. Utilize district-wide data to determine the district PK-12 professional development plan.

By meeting regularly, the leadership team can share information, discuss challenges, and collaborate to develop solutions that benefit the district as a whole. Additionally, holding these meetings on a consistent basis can help establish a more cohesive and efficient decision-making process, as all members of the team will have a better understanding of the issues at hand and the perspectives of their colleagues.

1. Finalize the report and download as a PDF.

2. Submit the PDF, including the Improvement/ Action Plan, via email to the school system and the NDE at: nde.accreditation@nebraska.gov

