

*School Alliance for
Continuous Improvement*

**Homer Central School District
*K-12 Mathematics Training Visit***

October 2009



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Introduction and Overview

This feedback report is a product of the School Alliance for Continuous Improvement (SACI). Produced by the District Review Team, it includes:

- ◆ General information about SACI;
- ◆ Scoring information based on evidence pertaining to the district's educational program;
- ◆ Strengths, recommendations for growth, and innovative practices identified by the team;

The districts in this alliance represent rural and suburban schools from across the State. These districts include diverse populations in terms of ethnic and socioeconomic factors, and demonstrate a range of results in student performance as indicated by State measurements. These districts share certain common interests:

- ◆ A commitment to rigorous standards for all students;
- ◆ A commitment to assessing student performance against international, national and local measures of excellence, both quantitatively and qualitatively;
- ◆ A commitment to using data to guide school improvement and planning to continuously evaluate the impact and effectiveness of school improvement efforts.

In order to operationalize these commitments, district representatives have employed systems thinking and a data driven approach to determine how to affect teaching and learning in their districts. Representatives have worked closely together to:

- ◆ Develop a model to monitor, measure and report the effectiveness of district systems by analyzing data related to identified performance indicators;
- ◆ Train teams of teachers and administrators as "critical friends" -- professionals who can externally review and validate evidence of a district's progress in planning, implementing and attaining results and provide useful feedback which encourages self-reflection and continuous improvement;
- ◆ Create tools for identifying, and forums for sharing successful and innovative practices that help all students meet higher standards.

During a week in October, 2009, trained SACI mentors and Homer Central School District faculty and administrators conducted a review of the Homer Central School District's K-12 Mathematics Program. The purpose of the review was to train a team of Homer teachers and administrators in the SACI model using information collected and reviewed from their mathematics program. The team gathered data from interviews, documents and observations and used them to reach a consensus on data related to each of six indicators.

This report presents a summary of team decisions related to the evidence found and agreed upon. It is a rich repository of information to support strategic planning designed to improve educational processes in the district.

Acknowledgements

District Review Team

This report was created as a result a collaborative effort between the District Review Team and the hosting district.

District Coordinators:

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Teacher

Linda Llewelyn Director of Instruction and Assessment

Stacy Porter Homer Junior High School 8th Grade
Math Teacher

Thomas Turck Homer Junior High School Principal
Homer Central School District Feedback Report – October 2009

Doug Van Etten

Kathi Williams

Homer High School Principal

Hartnett School, 6th Grade Teacher

Information Sources

Interviews:

The following sixty seven (66) individuals were interviewed by the team as part of the District Review information gathering process:

Kindergarten Teachers (2)
Grade 1 teachers (3)
Grade 2 teachers (3)
Elementary reading teachers (2)
Elementary library-media specialist (1)
Elementary school social worker (1)
Elementary teachers from Hartnett Elementary School (4)
Teacher assistant Harnett Elementary School (1)
Grade 4 teachers (2)
Grade 5 teachers (2)
Grade 6 teachers (4)
Homer Intermediate School Reading teachers (2)
Homer Intermediate School Library-Media Specialist (1)
Homer Intermediate School special education teacher (1)
Homer Intermediate School vocal music teacher (1)
Homer Intermediate School Psychologist (1)
Grade 7 math teacher (2)
Grade 8 math teacher (2)
Grade 8 special education teachers (2)
Grade 7 science teacher (1)
Grade 8 science teacher (1)
Grade 8 AIS teacher (1)
High school math teachers (6)
AIS math teacher (1)
High school science teachers (4)
High school science teachers (2)
High school resource room teacher (1)
High school social studies teacher (1)
High school science teacher (1)
High school students (3)
Intermediate students (2)
Director of Guidance (1)
Principals (3)
Technology Director (1)
Superintendent of Schools (1)

Documents:

The following documents were reviewed by the team as part of the District Review information gathering process:

2008 October Class Size Report Section 1-5
2009 High School Student Report on Colleges Applied To and Accepted
2009-2010 District Goals
Algebra 10th Grade Course Outline
Algebra Course Outline, Year One and Two
Comparison Data, Grade 3-8 New York State Math Assessments, Created by the Central New York Regional Information Center Data Warehouse
Comprehensive District Educational Plan
Definition of AIS Services
District Technology Plan
District's News: What's the Latest
Early Morning Program and Summer Instruction Description
Elementary Welcome to Grade 2 Correspondence to Parents
First Grade Newsletter
Geometry Course Outline
Geometry Regents Course Outline
Hartnett Elementary School Staff Handbook
High School Guidance Office Program of Studies
High School Guidance Office Program of Studies containing AP Information
Homer Central School District Description of Academic Intervention Services
Homer Central School District Website
Homer Elementary School Monthly Newsletter
Homer High School Student Handbook
Homer Junior High School Newsletters
Homer Professional Development Plan
Junior High 8th Grade Parents Night Letter
Junior High Regents Math Letter
K-2 Mathematics Curriculum Brochure
K-8 Math Chapter Test, from Scott-Foresman and Addison Wesley Math Text Series
Kindergarten Newsletter
Lesson Plans 5th Grade, TD1
Lesson Plans, 1st Grade, DM1
Lesson Plans, 1st Grade, MS1
Lesson Plans, 2nd Grade PT4
Lesson Plans, 2nd Grade, PT2
Lesson Plans, 2nd Grade, PT3
Lesson Plans, 3rd Grade, LL1
Lesson Plans, 3rd Grade, LS1
Lesson Plans, 4th Grade, JK1
Lesson Plans, 4th Grade, MZ1
Lesson Plans, 5th Grade, DS1
Lesson Plans, 8th Grade, RD1
Lesson Plans, High School GS1

Lesson Plans, Kindergarten, JB2
Lesson Plans, Kindergarten, SP1
Lesson Plans, Kindergarten, SP2
List of Professional Development Offerings 2007 to Present
March 2009 SACI English Language Arts SACI Training Report
Math Flow Chart
Mission Statement
New Staff Orientation Packet
New York State Assessment Results Grades 3-8
New York State Report Card Hartnett School
New York State Report Card Homer Central School District Accountability and
Overview Report
New York State Report Card Homer Elementary School
New York State Report Card Homer High School
New York State Report Card Homer Intermediate School
New York State Report Card Homer Junior High School
Organizational Charts
Quarter 1 District Math Test, Kindergarten
Quarterly Assessments, Grades 5 and 6
Report Card Sample, Homer High School
Report Card Sample, Homer Junior High School
Second Grade Curriculum Plan Outline
Second Grade Newsletter
Statement of Operational Values
Summer 2008 Summer Curriculum Writing and Professional Development Offerings

#1: The leadership system is linked to goals for student performance.

Definition:

The degree to which the district operates from the perspective of a shared vision/ agreed upon goals that are driven by student performance.

Plan:

- 1) The Homer Central School District (HCSD) Board of Education has identified 2009-2010 district goals. The goals target the following areas:
 - a. Literacy
 - b. Increased parental involvement
 - c. Continued review of curriculum
 - d. Finances
 - e. Team approach to education
 - f. The promotion of green schools
 - g. Recognition of staff
 - h. Hartnett School feasibility study
 - i. Peer review of curriculum
 - j. Adequate Yearly Progress in Math and ELA
 - k. Graduation Rate Targets
 - i. 90% by 2010
 - ii. 95% by 2012
 - iii. 100% by 2014

- 2) There is a Statement of Operational Values that articulates four goals in the areas of instruction, technology, facilities and communication. The Statement of Operational Values defines “Blue Pride” in the Homer Central School District as:
 - a. The instruction goal includes passion for learning, respect for others, integrity, devotion to civility and excellence in instruction.
 - b. The technology goal includes district plans to provide equipment and maintain an active technology committee to review use.
 - c. The facilities goal includes making capital improvements on a routine basis and maintaining an active facilities committee to make recommendations and review facilities annually.
 - d. The communications goal includes an administrative liaison between staff and community and maintaining a grant writer to secure alternative financial resources.

- 3) The Homer Central School District has a publicized mission statement and vision statement.

- 4) There is a Comprehensive District Educational Plan (CDEP) that includes:
 - a. A statement of beliefs
 - b. Vision statement
 - c. Goals

- d. Planning committee memberships
 - e. Key areas of performance and statements of commitment
 - f. Initiatives including the following for mathematics:
 - i. District math program K-8
 - ii. Math aligned with New York State Core Curriculum
 - iii. Course curriculum documents
 - iv. Math unit assessments aligned with state benchmarks
 - v.
- 5) Board of Education (BOE) policy contains an organizational chart for curriculum administration.

Implementation:

- 6) Homer Teachers Association (HTA) representatives and administrators meet bi-monthly on the District Administrative Team to communicate and plan district goals/visions, as well as address staff concerns.
- 7) Administration and staff make educational decisions based on state mandates.
- 8) Student government organizations provide a communication link between administration, staff and students.
- 9) As per CDEP initiatives and the 2009-2010 District Goals, a School Alliance for Continuous Improvement (SACI) review of the district's math program occurred in October 2009.
- 10) The District's mission and vision statements are available on most district documents and the District web site.
- 11) Most teachers appear to strive for maximum personal growth for all students as stated in the District's mission and vision statements.
- 12) Based on interviews and documents reviewed, most teachers are working to implement the District's shared vision by encouraging each child to work to their fullest potential, be responsible, competent citizens and become an asset to society.
- 13) The Director of Instruction and Evaluation makes decisions regarding the District's math curriculum. The Director of Instruction and Evaluation is responsible for monitoring and evaluating District math instructional programs.
- 14) The instructional staff and administrators have input into the District's decision making process through the Professional Development Committee, The District Technology Team, grade level team meetings, Site-Based Teams, individual building staff meetings, District Administrative Team meetings which include representation from the Homer Teacher Association, and committees that meet on an as needed basis.

- 15) The Board of Education and District administrators provide resources and materials for the implementation of the math instructional program.

Student Outcomes:

- 16) The BOE goal to bring the district into “good standing” for the Homer Intermediate School on the New York State Report Card has been achieved. All District schools are in “good standing” and making “adequate yearly progress” as per District goals.
- 17) The graduation rate for 2008-2009 was 91%, which exceeded the 2008-2009 Board of Education goal as well as the Board of Education goal for 2010.

#2: Instructional practices are evaluated and modified based on assessment of student performance.

Definition:

The degree to which educators use student data to drive instructional change.

Plan:

- 1) There is a Homer Central School District description of Academic Intervention Services that includes:
 - a. a statement of purpose
 - b. program accountability
 - c. assessment
 - d. parent notification
 - e. sources of data for decision making
 - f. level of services
 - g. eligibility criteria
 - h. screening procedures
 - i. exit criteria

Implementation:

- 2) Some teacher-created lesson plans include clearly-stated standards, objectives and assessments.
- 3) Textbook selection in grades K-8 is done by committee. Often teachers volunteer to pilot a series. The selection process involves teachers and is facilitated by the Director of Instruction and Evaluation.
- 4) Textbook selection in grades 9-12 is performed by teachers within respective departments.
- 5) Different math textbook series are used K-2, 3-5, 6, 7-8 and at the high school.
- 6) In grades 3-8, the textbook is mainly used as a resource. Each series has a variety of resources available to teachers including assessment guides and on-line extensions available to students and parents.
- 7) Teachers use a wide variety of resources in lesson planning.
- 8) Most teachers report that they monitor and adjust instruction according to student needs.
- 9) Most teachers report that they prioritize curriculum based on experience, expectations, and the New York State learning standards. Most teachers report that they formulate lesson plans using a variety of resources including the New

York State Core Curriculum, the adopted textbook series, scope and sequence outlines, professional colleagues and organizations, SUNY Cortland, professional development offerings, internet resources and review books for state tests.

- 10) There are a variety of instructional interventions in place for students. Examples include
 - a. Academic Intervention Services (AIS)
 - b. Early morning programs
 - c. Response to Intervention (RTI)
 - d. Inclusion and co-teaching
 - e. STAR Math and Reading
 - f. Staff development in instructional strategies
 - g. Extra-help periods
- 11) Parents are informed, in writing, when a student's program is changed to include acceleration or formal intervention.
- 12) When students enter the accelerated math program, parents receive a letter informing them of the requirements necessary to remain in program.
- 13) Initial screening exams / activities are utilized in kindergarten to determine individual student's baseline skills.
- 14) The Homer Central School District meets student needs in a variety of ways:
 - a. Class size
 - b. Special Education
 - c. Differentiated Instruction
 - d. Co-teaching
 - e. Professional development in teaching styles and strategies
 - f. Technology
 - g. Grade level /departmental meetings
- 15) Staff has a variety of opportunities to discuss curricular issues including: Staff development, team/department meetings, and daily communications.
- 16) Most teachers report that they teach life skills and tolerance.
- 17) Most teachers report that they teach study and organizational skills to improve student learning. Most teachers emphasize study skills in their daily instruction
- 18) The high school (grades 9-12) math teachers meet on a regular basis to review student performance data, assess student needs, and plan instructional programs.
- 19) Math 4 Today® is being implemented at Hartnett Elementary School. Student's complete four questions each day during morning program, teachers go over the solutions, and a test is administered at the end of each week.
- 20) At the junior high and high school, teachers use an item analysis of the Regents exams to revise curriculum.

- 21) Both teacher-created and publisher created assessments are used in the classroom to evaluate student progress.
- 22) Teachers administer quarterly math assessments at grades K-8. Tests are aligned with curriculum and mirror the state test format.
- 23) Students' performance data from the quarterly math assessments are included in the District's Local School Report Card (see Indicator 5) and teachers can access their respective class quarterly test data on-line.
- 24) The quarterly math tests are analyzed based on student performance and modified annually as needed.

Student Outcomes:

25) There is a correlation between the development and implementation of the District's Quarterly Math Tests at Grades K-8 and the improvement in student performance on the State's Grade 3-8 Math Assessments. The District's quarterly math tests were developed locally by teachers, and student performance on the Grade 3-8 New York State Assessments has improved significantly since implementation. The performance improvement in the Homer Central School District has been above the BOCES average. Although the rate of improvement cannot be attributed solely to the initiation of the quarterly tests there is clearly a perception in the district that the quarterly test process has been a contributing factor to the improvement in student performance. Teachers and administrators indicate that the quarterly tests have created a sequence of instruction, a common math vocabulary, and a vehicle for the discussion of student performance. Student performance on the New York State Grade 3-8 Math Assessments is outlined below, the percentage indicated the % of students passing:

School Year	2006	2007	2008	2009
Grade 3	73.4%	80.0%	92.1%	95.4%
Grade 4	76.0%	71.8%	85.9%	85.3%
Grade 5	64.6%	83.3%	78.7%	93.4%
Grade 6	48.6%	67.4%	88.8%	78%
Grade 7	62.6%	57.1%	77.7%	97%
Grade 8	58.7%	68.3%	68.7%	88.9%

26) A review of the Homer Central School District New York State School Report Card indicates that both elementary and middle level math are in good standing and made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) on all measures and for all subgroups as per District goals and the Comprehensive District Educational Plan.

#3: The curriculum is linked to standards for and data on student performance.

Definition:

The degree to which curriculum is linked to state and district standards and data on student performance.

Plan:

- 1) There is a district organizational chart that articulates the District's plan for curriculum decision making in the district.
- 2) There is an articulated 9-12 Math Curriculum for Regents and Non-regents courses.
- 3) High school courses have distinct course outlines based on New York State Standards.
- 4) A Program of Studies exists for the high school mathematics program. Course sequences are illustrated graphically.
- 5) Math curriculum documents, including a calendar/pacing chart, have been developed for Grades 3-8.
- 6) There is a Parent Guide to Mathematics K-2 at Homer Elementary School.
- 7) Board of Education Goal #4 articulated in the Homer Central Schools Proposed Goals for 2009-2010 calls for a peer review of the district wide Mathematics Program.
- 8) Board of Education Goal #5 calls for the "provision of time for the vertical articulation of curriculum."
- 9) Math curriculum plans exist for grades K-8 based on New York State Learning Standards.

Implementation:

- 10) The Director of Instruction and Evaluation is responsible for monitoring and coordinating the District math curriculum. This person is responsible for tracking district student performance results and New York State expectations for curriculum with the assistance of the Grade 9-12 Department Chair.
- 11) Grade level meetings (3/4, 4/5, 5/6, 6/7, 7/8, 8/9) have been held to allow for communication across grades and buildings.

- 12) Time is provided at Homer Elementary School for teachers to meet every sixth day to discuss students and curriculum.
- 13) Most math teachers use curriculum plans to keep on schedule. Teachers communicate and collaborate to update and adjust curriculum as needed.
- 14) Math teachers examine data – test scores, Regents examinations, and quarterly exams—and adjust curriculum accordingly.
- 15) Teachers assist with student placement for subsequent years.
- 16) At-risk students at the high school have the opportunity for a two-year Algebra model. Eighth & ninth grade teachers meet to make recommendations for students who would benefit from this program.
- 17) A 2nd grade math vocabulary & glossary exists to aid in math instruction and student understanding of key terms.
- 18) The district establishes curriculum committees on an as-needed basis.
- 19) Teachers from specific grade levels have met as a committee to create and revise quarterly assessments modeling the New York State Examinations. The quarterly assessments serve to create a curriculum sequence for instruction.
- 20) Teachers in grades 3-8 use sample and previous NYS Math exams to help prepare students for the New York State math assessments.
- 21) Grade 9-12 Math teachers schedule after-school and Saturday review classes during May and June for all Regents classes. Students are required to attend at least three sessions and receive extra credit for additional participation.
- 22) Math Regents exams are scored by a team of math teachers from grades 8-12. Math curriculum may be revised based on exam results.
- 23) The Algebra curriculum was developed during summer of 2008 to address student performance trends derived from data. This program targets learners requiring additional support in order to meet state testing requirements. Program success is being monitored through 2009-2010.
- 24) Some English Language Arts, Social Studies, Science, Physical Education, Music, and Language Other Than English teachers are integrating math into their respective curricula and instruction.

Student/Outcomes:

- 25) Math scores on New York State Grade 3-8 Assessments (see chart, Instruction Student Outcomes) and New York State Regents examinations state examinations have shown improvement or maintained a high level of performance over the past several years. There is anecdotal evidence that contributing factors may include:

- a. Student participation in after school and Saturday review classes.
- b. The two year Algebra model for at-risk students in the high school.
- c. The integration of math curriculum into other subject areas (e.g. science, ELA, physical education).
- d. The development and implementation of the K-8 Math Quarterly Assessments.
- e. Collaboration among math teachers regarding the math curriculum.
- f. Intentional promotion of better study habits.
- g. Reinforcement of job and educational opportunities in the Math/Science field and everyday use of math skills.
- h. Familiarity with state exams and more focus on vocabulary.

26)The charts below outlines Math A Math Regents results over the past three years:

Math A: General Education Students:

School Year	Percent above 65	Percent above 85
2007-08	96%	49%
2006-07	95%	51%
2005-06	94%	45%

Math A Students with Disabilities

2007-08	77%	9%
2006-07	50%	14%
2005-06	65%	13%

#4: Professional and organizational development is linked to student learning needs.

Definition:

The degree to which professional and/or organizational development is linked to student learning needs as measured by student performance.

Plan

- 1) There is a District Professional Development Plan (PDP) that targets the following areas for professional staff development:
 - a. Technological skills and curriculum integration
 - b. Instructional techniques
 - c. Coordination of curriculum across grade and content areas
 - d. Reading
- 2) The District PDP establishes a Professional Staff Development Committee (PSDC) that includes administration and staff representation.
- 3) There is a plan that requires teachers to complete 7 hours of in-service annually to provide for professional development.
- 4) There is a Teacher Mentor Program packet that outlines the District teacher mentor program.

Implementation:

- 5) The Homer Central School District Professional Staff Development Committee meets monthly to plan continual staff development. The committee includes representation from all five schools. Meetings are open to all staff members to attend. The committee considers activities suggested by staff members.
- 6) MyLearning Plan™ is used to plan and facilitate a wide range of staff development opportunities.
- 7) The district has a new teacher orientation booklet which includes information about what works in Homer schools, and lifelong learning goals.
- 8) Summer staff development time is provided to develop and revise curriculum and assessment.
- 9) Grades 3 and 4 realigned the math curriculum during the summer of 2009 as a result of New York State moving the Grade 3-8 math tests to May.
- 9) Teachers seek in-service workshops of interest for personal and professional growth.
- 10) A Data Mentor® workshop was offered to Homer Intermediate School teachers to review state assessment scores.

- 11) The Board of Education encourages and supports professional development through the allocation of resources.
- 12) Professional development opportunities are used for:
 - a. finding primary sources
 - b. obtaining classroom materials and
 - c. gaining information about State programs
- 13) Professional development in the Homer Central School District promotes teachers as models of life-long learning.
- 14) Workshops are offered for staff beyond the school day and school year.
- 15) Some teachers interviewed indicated that participation in professional development makes teachers more reflective and contributes to teacher enthusiasm.
- 16) Staff development days allow staff time to meet as a department and/or grade level.
- 17) Homer High School math teachers used professional development days to discuss remediation for struggling students.
- 18) Topics for professional development are identified through the district needs assessment including the following sources:
 - a. school report cards
 - b. BEDS data
 - c. attendance
 - d. teacher self assessments
 - e. state benchmarks
 - f. morale surveys and
 - g. curriculum surveys.
- 19) The district has a mentor program for new teachers.

Student Outcomes:

- 20) There is anecdotal evidence that Homer High School math teachers have used calculator workshops to enhance student performance in using calculators in their class work.

#5: Data Management and communication are linked to improving the entire learning organization

Definition

The degree to which information is managed and communicated for the purpose of improving the entire learning organization

Plan:

- 1) There is a plan to create a local report card that includes state test scores, quarterly math and English Language Arts (ELA) test scores, and diagnostic data.
- 2) Goal #3 of the 2009-2010 Board of Education Goals is to “Increase parental and community involvement in the district’s schools and to create a welcoming district.”

Implementation

- 3) Local data has been used to develop a district-wide report card.
- 4) Quarterly exams were developed and are in use for Grade K-8 ELA and math. The data is sent to the Director of Instruction and Evaluation for use on the district-wide report card. All teachers can access information on the district-wide local report card relative to their own students.
- 5) Most district buildings publish a monthly newsletter.
- 6) Open House/Curriculum nights occur in each building to provide information to parents.
- 7) Teachers use a variety of means to communicate with parents. These include:
 - a. E-mail
 - b. Five-week report/ quarterly report cards
 - c. Telephone calls
 - d. Parent-teacher conferences
 - e. Daily behavior reports
 - f. Weekly grade reports
 - g. Individual teacher Blackboard websites/staff web pages
 - h. Individual teacher created newsletters
 - i. Homework Hotline
 - j. Assignment notebooks/planners
 - k. General information correspondence
- 8) At Homer Elementary School, all teachers send home weekly newsletters.

- 9) District buildings distribute a student and staff handbook with consistent categories and topics. The student version is available on the district website.
- 10) Various forms of data are used by most staff to modify and adjust classroom instruction. These include quarterly exams, regents exam results, chapter and unit tests, diagnostic assessments, etc.
- 11) District-wide mailing (Trojan Messenger), district website, and individual mailings of student results enable parental access to district state test data.
- 12) Most teachers stated that they were given opportunities to collaborate with each other at their grade level to analyze data and discuss the impact on instruction.
- 13) Some teachers do an item analysis of data and use results to modify instruction.
- 14) Support Service data was collected on Parent-teacher conference and “reluctant” parent contacts to gauge efforts toward meeting Board of Education Goal #3.
- 15) Many teachers use data from regents exam scores and other formal assessments to revise curriculum during the summer.
- 16) Data Mentor® program is available for teachers to analyze student achievement and modify instruction as needed.
- 17) The high school Algebra Star course was developed from a review of student data in existing courses in an effort to improve student achievement. Data will be analyzed to gauge effectiveness.
- 18) A district registrar position was created to more consistently manage student data.
- 19) A District Data Analyst provides pertinent data requested by instructional staff.
- 20) District data is shared at Board of Education meetings through reports and presentations.
- 22) There is a Parent Guide to Mathematics K-2 at Homer Elementary School.
- 23) Parents are informed about curriculum through course outlines, Open Houses, and parent meetings, and the High School Program of Studies.

Student Outcomes:

- 21) Over a four-year period, the total percentage of high school students enrolled in math courses has increased from 89% to 98%.
- 22) Students performing at a level of 3 and 4 on grades 3-8 mathematics exams increased 12.6% from 2006-07 to 2007-08.

23)The district's total cohort results in secondary-level math after four years of instruction increased 3% from 2006 to 2008. This increase outperformed most similar schools across the state.

#6: Technology for Teaching and Learning

Definition

The degree to which technology is integrated with teaching and learning (curriculum, instruction, and assessment) to provide educational opportunities for all students.

Plan:

- 1) Technology is Goal #2 in the Homer Central School District Statement of Operational Values. The goal calls for the provision of resources and the establishment of an on-going Technology Committee.
- 2) There is a District Technology Plan (2007-2010) created by a committee of teachers, parents, administrators, and BOE members. The plan includes two goals as well as strategies and activities for achievement of the goals. The plan is scheduled for review and revision in 2010. A five year replacement cycle for aging hardware is included in the plan.
- 3) The Professional Development Plan includes a goal related to technology skills and curriculum integration.

Implementation:

- 4) The District Technology Plan is supported by the Board of Education (BOE). The BOE provides for continued funding for technology based on current funding sources (local budget, state aid, federal aid, grants, and capital projects).
- 5) The District's Technology Committee meets on a regular basis to review and make recommendations relative to the District's Technology program and applications.
- 6) The Director of Technology and staff are available to assist teachers and students.
- 7) The district continues to support computer labs and computers in the classrooms K-12.
- 8) Support to integrate technology in the curriculum is provided on a regular basis at all buildings.
- 9) Instructional technology workshops are provided to support staff and student needs.
- 10) Technology hardware upgrades are ongoing to support increased student achievement and integration of technology in learning.
- 11) Teachers use a variety of online resources such as teacher-developed websites, blogs, & virtual classrooms for instructional purposes. Other technology used includes Promethean Boards™, projection devices, graphing calculators and email.

- 12) Students have access to assignments and worksheets online. Math activities are posted on the Homer Central School District website for student and teacher use. Students use internet-web based games for practice and review in some classes.
- 13) To support lesson development, math teachers use a variety of resources available on the internet—on-line textbook resources, jmap, regentsprep, and other math-related websites.
- 14) Every classroom is equipped with at least two computers.
- 15) Projection devices are used in some classrooms.
- 16) Graphing calculators and projection devices are used by math teachers at the high school. Calculators are issued to students for the entire school year.
- 17) Laptop carts are available for use at the elementary school, intermediate school, and the junior high.
- 18) Email is used for communication between administrators, teachers, students and parents. Email addresses of instructional staff can be found on the district website.
- 19) All 7-12 teachers use an electronic format for recording grades.
- 20) Most K-6 teachers use an electronic format for recording grades.
- 21) Hartnett Elementary has a BOCES itinerant teacher to teach students use of technology.
- 22) Physical Education teachers 9-12 use Palm Pilots ® for recording grades and participation during class.
- 23) Voting options on Promethean Boards™ allow use of technology to provide immediate feedback on student progress.

Student Outcomes:

- 24) Anecdotal evidence exists that use of Promethean Boards™ increases student enthusiasm and involvement. As a result, student performance has also improved. A 98% pass rate on the Geometry Regents is cited as an example.
- 25) Anecdotal evidence indicates that use of graphing calculators leads to better understanding of many mathematical concepts.

- 26) Parents report that students are benefiting from the use of technology.
- 27) Anecdotal evidence exists that students in Math Applications are gaining real-life math skills & knowledge related to budgeting, renting an apartment, grocery shopping, and use of credit.

Areas of Strength

The following areas of strength in the district's overall programs were identified during the District Review process:

- 1) Faculty and administration are focused on what is best for students. Caring teachers advocate for students. This is reflected in the shared vision of the district
- 2) A dedicated staff that is passionate about teaching and willing to go above and beyond the call of duty: the instructional staff makes itself available for extra student help and readily facilitates activities such as the book club at elementary school and the science club activities at the intermediate school
- 3) Parent and community support for school programs/initiatives
- 4) The communication and collaboration among teachers
- 5) The high level of communication between teachers and parents
- 6) The district history of setting mastery level goals and teachers setting high standards. There is an instructional emphasis on "individual personal best" as mastery.
- 7) Positive staff morale
- 8) The culture of the school district supports a problem-solving approach and a high level of collaboration
- 9) The positive partnership between the District and SUNY Cortland, Tompkins-Cortland Community College, and the Cortland County Teacher Center
- 10) The philosophy, organization, and culture of the high school math department fosters a collaborative teaching/learning environment
- 11) The district's willingness to provide the necessary resources to enhance the educational program: e.g. professional development, innovative materials, technology, etc
- 12) District leadership (Board of Education and district administration) support of the instructional staff and school programs
- 13) The diversity of teaching styles
- 14) The District's support for instructional technology initiatives

- 15) Great students! Compliments are often received when Homer students go out into the community.
- 16) District support of smaller class sizes
- 17) The continuity and consistency of staff throughout the district helps to enhance an environment where staff/parents/community members know each other and have roots in community
- 18) The opportunity for faculty to do grade level/subject area curriculum work during the summer months
- 19) The cooperation between teachers and administration
- 20) The culture of the school district: the teaching/learning climate is collaborative, trusting, and supportive: administration and staff are willing to go the extra mile to create a “safe and comfortable” environment. There is a sense of community among students, teachers, staff, and parents.

Recommendations for Growth

The following recommendations for growth in the district's overall program were identified during the District Review process:

Leadership

- 1) The District needs to look at its district goals and plans relative to the articulation of student outcomes/measurable objectives, action plan timelines, and the communication of the plans both internally and externally. The district has created a variety of comprehensive plans that are not necessarily communicated to the instructional staff/administrators or the community (where appropriate). The district planning structure needs to be examined with an eye toward creating an on-going feedback loop relative to the effective implementation of district plans and the achievement of district goals.
- 2) The District needs to clearly identify, articulate and communicate its decision making process. The organizational structure chart (included in the Board of Education Policies) should be revisited and job descriptions should be reviewed and updated as needed. As was found in the SACI English Language Arts Training Report from March 2009, there is clearly some confusion regarding the roles and inter-relationship among the special education director, special education faculty, general education faculty, and building administrators. Roles and responsibilities in the area of special education need to be clarified.
- 3) The District should begin to ask the question "what is the expected student outcome" of this plan, of this program, of this curriculum, of this instructional practice.

Instruction

- 1) The District needs to examine the delivery of Academic Intervention Services and remedial instruction in math at all levels. Although there is an Academic Intervention Plan and Description, it needs to be clarified relative to math instruction. (e.g. Math AIS at grade K-2, instructional math support at all levels with respect to at risk math students).
- 2) The time available for math instruction at the kindergarten-second grade level was continually raised as an issue during the review process. As the time for English Language Arts instruction has been formally structured to include 90 minutes per day of ELA instruction, the time for math instruction has been reduced. The district needs to examine the math instructional delivery system at K-2 to ensure a consistent and equitable teaching approach.

- 3) The district should revisit Response to Intervention to ensure consistency of implementation and to ensure that students are achieving the results intended.
- 4) The district needs to examine the instructional transition from grade 2/Homer Elementary School to grade 3/Homer Intermediate School. Increased opportunities for the sharing of instructional information from Homer Elementary School to Homer Intermediate School should be created.
- 5) The district should examine vehicles for vertical collaboration among its instructional staff.
- 6) There are pockets of instructional excellence and pockets of consistency evident throughout the district but they do not necessarily connect. It is recommended that the district initiate professional dialogue in order to more clearly define what the Homer Central School district believes about teaching, learning, and instructional delivery (i.e. this is what we believe about teaching/learning and here is a menu of best instructional practices in the Homer Central School District to choose from and build upon). The intent here would be to maintain and enhance the instructional creativity that already exists in the district while, at the same time, defining and articulating the instructional delivery system.

Curriculum

- 1) The District needs to create a consistent K-12 curriculum template for organizing and defining the District Math Curriculum.
- 2) The District should explore strategies for increasing collaborative opportunities both vertically and horizontally.
- 3) The current textbook adoption process needs to be identified, articulated, and communicated. The district should then revisit and revise the textbook adoption process as needed. The revision process should include involvement, input and feedback from the instructional staff and administration.
- 4) It is recommended that the District explore increased learning opportunities for its higher level students at all levels
- 5) There is a general impression in the educational community that state assessments drive instruction. Discussion needs to be generated internally as to how assessments are used in the District in the instructional process.
- 6) The District needs to continue its efforts to create a district-wide curriculum review and development infrastructure that provides for vertical collaboration and representation from all instructional levels and programs. It is evident, since our last SACI review that strides are being made in this area and the District is encouraged to continue these efforts.

Professional Development

Feedback during this visit indicates that there is substantial District support for individual professional development initiatives and requests. However, the district needs to move toward a systemic professional development model. The District should revisit its Professional Development Plan with a focus on gathering feedback from the instructional staff/administration on the effectiveness of the District's current professional development process/offerings and future needs. Future professional development offerings/needs identified during this SACI training review visit include:

- 1) On-going professional development related to the various math textbook series
- 2) Increased math professional development opportunities, particularly at the K-2 level
- 3) Training and planning to enhance instructional collaboration
- 4) Professional development time to work on the vertical alignment of curriculum and the creation of a common math teaching vocabulary
- 5) The opportunity to attend professional development workshops as an instructional team
- 6) Differentiated instruction
- 7) Workshops on the analysis and use of data
- 8) Time to collaborate together for the review of data and student achievement/assessments results
- 9) Time for vertical collaboration relative to curriculum and instruction
- 10) Professional Development related to meeting the needs of special needs/at risk students

Once again, a focus on student outcomes should be a discussion point when considering Professional Development programs. Begin by asking the question, "What impact does this professional development offering have on our students?"

Data Management and Communication

This SACI Math Training Review indicates that the district is in the beginning stages of learning to manage data to impact instructional decisions. The district has created a local school report card that includes both local and state assessments and is available online to the instructional staff. Now that the report card has been created, the District needs to develop and implement a plan for the instructional analysis, sharing, and communication of the student achievement data. There are pockets of excellence within the district where data is being used to drive instructional decisions and there is clearly an interest among the professional staff to use data to enhance the teaching learning process. That being said, the district needs to identify, articulate, and communicate what the current process is for the management and analysis of data/student achievement information. There is a need to provide training and resources so that the use of data has both organization and intentionality.

Technology

The District has a comprehensive Technology Plan that includes a stated vision, concrete objectives, strategies/timelines/ accountability for implementation, and student benchmarks. As the district moves forward with the 2010 revision of the technology plan it needs to address the challenge of limited time and shrinking

resources and identify what resources are actually available and what can actually be accomplished. Attention should be given to the communication of the plan to district instructional staff. Additional instructional technology issues identified during this SACI visit include:

- 1) Examining the use and effectiveness of the computer lab at K-2
- 2) Support for the instructional integration of technology at the classroom/program level
- 3) Computer time availability for students.

Best Practices

The following innovative and best practices were identified during the District Review process:

- 1) Blue Pride Initiative
- 2) The Homer Foundation
- 3) Project Soar, the Grade 7 Orientation Programs
- 4) The 8th to 9th Grade student transition process which specifically designates a 9th grade guidance counselor to enhance the process.
- 5) Senior High School Math Regents Review Classes with required attendance for students
- 6) Mandated after school program for students in need of support
- 7) The opportunity for graduates to present to the high school classes and the BOE on their preparation for college
- 8) The concept and practice of the Homer Administrative Team meetings which have representation from the Homer Teachers Association. The function of the team is to plan District goals/visions and to address District concerns.