

Washington County School Improvement Audit Report of Findings

School: Valley Institute Elementary School

Date: 03-09-2009

Committee Chair: Janet Lester

Committee Vice-Chair: David Lambert

Committee Clerk:

Team Members:

Jane Laoo

Heather McCoy

David Winship

Regina Hawkins

Gail Mullins

Lisa McCoy

Niz Barker

Gail Gilland

Tammy Sullivan

Traveling the road of continuous improvement is how we work to provide the World's Best Education

Curriculum Alignment: Written			
Indicators	Significant Findings	AOS	AI
CA 1.1 Making curriculum resources and supplementary materials available for use by teachers			
CA 1.2 Establishing specific learning objectives that align with state learning standards and address essential understandings, knowledge, and skills	Instruction was driven by state learning standards. Student learning (skills and knowledge) was monitored frequently by teachers.	✓	
CA 1.3 Listing instructional strategies and designing learning activities that align with state learning standards and address essential understandings, knowledge, and skills			
CA 1.4 Developing daily lesson plans that fit logically within the unit and within the context of the overall curriculum			
CA 1.5 Using student performance data to develop daily lesson plans that reflect consideration of the learning strengths and needs of students	Evidence of teacher involvement in analyzing data and the use of data to design instruction was observed.	✓	
CA 1.6 Evaluating the appropriateness of pacing and mapping regularly, and making appropriate adjustments			
CA 1.7 Analyzing the curriculum components across grade levels in like content areas to identify areas of strength and areas of weakness			

Curriculum Alignment: Taught			
Indicators	Significant Findings	AOS	AI
CA 2.1 Focusing instruction on specific learning objectives that promote the attainment of state learning standards and address essential understandings, knowledge, and skills			
CA 2.2 Using available curriculum resources and supplementary materials appropriately to promote attainment of state learning standards			
CA 2.3 Presenting accurate knowledge through meaningful contexts and connected disciplines	Teachers are commended for addressing target areas with a school-wide interdisciplinary approach.	✓	
CA 2.4 Employing instructional strategies that are research-based and proven effective			
CA 2.5 Assigning projects and tasks that require students to integrate and apply their learning in meaningful contexts and to reflect on what they have learned			
CA 2.6 Providing students with learning experiences that engage them in active learning	Increase the variety and intensity of strategies and assessment techniques throughout the lesson to increase student engagement.		✓
CA 2.7 Differentiating instruction to meet the identified strengths and needs of individual students and groups of students	Differentiated instruction strategies are being used as teachers continue to grow and improve in this area.	✓	
CA 2.8 Providing all students access to available materials, resources, and services to support learning			
CA 2.9 Providing teachers with feedback on the alignment of instruction to state learning standards and essential understandings, knowledge, and skills			
CA 2.10 Monitoring teacher implementation of the curriculum throughout the year			

Curriculum Alignment: Assessed			
Indicators	Significant Findings	AOS	AI
CA 3.1 Assessing student progress on a regular basis	Throughout most lessons, student learning was monitored by teachers through notebook checks, student questioning and other small group activities.	✓	
CA 3.2 Ensuring that assessments are aligned with state learning standards and essential understandings, knowledge, and skills			
CA 3.3 Providing opportunities for students to take tests that are similar in content and format to state assessments			
CA 3.4 Using a variety of classroom-based assessment methods and tools (student self-evaluation, performance checklists, rubrics, scales, projects, products, tests, quizzes) before, during, and after units of study to monitor student progress	Increase the variety and intensity of assessment techniques throughout the lesson to increase student engagement.		✓
CA 3.5 Providing assessments that require students to use knowledge, comprehension, application and reasoning skills	Continue to assess students using a variety of strategies which enhance application and reasoning skills.		✓
CA 3.6 Periodically reporting student progress toward mastery of learning objectives to students and parents in a way that is clear and understandable	Weekly folders are sent home with students to ensure parents are informed of their child's educational progress.	✓	
CA 3.7 Monitoring the results of classroom-based assessments to ensure attainment of the knowledge and skills required for success on state assessments			

Professional Development: Organizational Development			
Indicators	Significant Findings	AOS	AI
PD 1.1 Designing an ongoing, school-based program of professional development that is based on the analyses of data and is aligned with the school's goals for improving student achievement	The School Improvement Team (BLT) plays an integral part in goal setting and development of the school improvement team.	✓	
PD 1.2 Basing professional development programs and activities on research-based principles and practices			
PD 1.3 Allocating resources to support the professional development program and ensure implementation of improvement initiatives	Provide professional development opportunities that train and encourage faculty members to incorporate technology in their classrooms.		✓
PD 1.4 Focusing the core of staff learning on research-based content and instructional practices that have been proven effective in improving student achievement			
PD 1.5 Identifying essential learning outcomes from professional development activities that will be used to change practice			
PD 1.6 Including theory, demonstration, practice with feedback, and coaching in the school's professional development programs and activities			
PD 1.7 Monitoring the degree to which new practices are implemented as prescribed			
PD 1.8 Determining the effect of changes in practice on student learning			

Professional Development: Personal Professional Growth & Evaluation			
Indicators	Significant Findings	AOS	AI
PD 2.1 Embedding professional growth and development into job performance expectations and the performance evaluation process			
PD 2.2 Analyzing data/evidence from a variety of relevant sources to identify goals for individual growth and development			
PD 2.3 Aligning plans for individual professional development with local improvement initiatives and with areas identified for individual growth			
PD 2.4 Connecting teachers' learning outcomes from professional development activities directly to their work in classrooms			
PD 2.5 Connecting teachers to external resources such as conferences, workshops, and support networks that align with the needs of individual teachers, departments/grade levels, or local improvement initiatives			
PD 2.6 Providing opportunities for teachers to experiment, practice, and obtain feedback as they integrate newly learned skills into their repertoire of instructional practices	VIES is commended for beginning Response to Intervention (Rtl) strategies for struggling students by the implementation of REACH (Raising Educational Abilities in Children) committee.	✓	
PD 2.7 Regularly monitoring the progress of staff in achieving individual professional development goals			

Use of Time and School Scheduling: Instructional Time			
Indicators	Significant Findings	AOS	AI
TS 1.1 Basing decisions related to the pacing of the curriculum on state test blueprints and on student performance data	School scheduling and decision making is determined by student performance. Learning and student safety are top priorities, which is obvious as soon as you step in the building.	✓	
TS 1.2 Arranging classroom instructional time to allow for variety of instructional activities			
TS 1.3 Organizing instruction and structuring lessons to maximize student time on task	Teachers are commended for making maximum use of instructional class time. Students were on task with limited down time.	✓	
TS 1.4 Maintaining a high level of student engagement throughout the lesson	Explore ways to focus students attention on the lesson with opening activities designed to hook the students and set the expectation for learning.		✓
TS 1.5 Using classroom instructional time to provide enrichment opportunities and support services to individuals and small groups based on students' identified strengths and needs	The use of inclusion is increasing throughout the building and has been effective with small reading groups.	✓	
TS 1.6 Establishing classroom routines that maximize the use of non-instructional time			
TS 1.7 Establishing school-wide organizational practices that minimize unnecessary interruptions to instructional time	Explore ways to minimize interruptions of class time.		✓
TS 1.8 Regularly monitoring the use of instructional time in classrooms			

Use of Time and School Scheduling: School Scheduling Practices			
Indicators	Significant Findings	AOS	AI
<p>TS 2.1 Meeting SOA requirements for length of school year, length of school day, or number of hours of instruction in core areas</p> <p>a. Length of school year (180 days OR 990 hours grades 1-12; 540 hours kindergarten)</p> <p>b. Length of school day (5 hours; 3 hours minimum for kindergarten only)</p> <p>c. Number of hours of instruction in core areas (ES: 75% in 4 core areas; MS/HS: 140 clock hours OR 560 total in 4 core areas for grade 6)</p>			
<p>TS 2.2 Building schedules that are based on identified learning and instructional needs and support the implementation of improvement initiatives</p>			
<p>TS 2.3 Scheduling non-academic events to minimally impact instructional time</p>			
<p>TS 2.4 Allocating time in the schedule for teachers to collaborate with other teachers, parents and students</p>			
<p>TS 2.5 Establishing procedures and communicating expectations related to the allocation and use of time</p>			
<p>TS 2.6 Ensuring that the time allocated for specific activities is used to complete essential tasks according to established expectations</p>	Classroom observations reflect well-planned lessons and a wide variety of closure activities.	✓	
<p>TS 2.7 Utilizing a school schedule that is conducive to providing intervention and remediation strategies and programs within the school day</p>	The use of small group instruction is effective and is being expanded throughout the building.	✓	
<p>TS 2.8 Allocating resources to extend learning time beyond the regular school day</p>			
<p>TS 2.9 Regularly monitoring the implementation of schedules and making adjustments, as needed, to maximize efficient use of time</p>			

Use of Data for Making Decisions: Instruction			
Indicators	Significant Findings	AOS	AI
D 1.1 Using data/evidence from multiple sources to plan instruction that promotes that attainment of state standards and essential understandings, knowledge, and skills			
D 1.2 Collecting, compiling, and analyzing data related to instructional practices to determine the degree of alignment with state learning standards and to identify professional development needs			
D 1.3 Sharing responsibility for collecting and compiling data related to instructional programs and services			
D 1.4 Sharing responsibility for analyzing data and making instructional decisions based on the results	The leadership team has input when making decisions regarding school-wide instruction.	✓	
D 1.5 Collecting and compiling individual student performance data to identify students' strengths and needs, plans instruction, and monitor individual student progress over time			
D 1.6 Using results of data analyses to design, monitor, and evaluate instructional programs, support services, and professional development activities			
D 1.7 Training staff in the processes and procedures for collecting and analyzing classroom-based, local, and state assessment data to make instructional decisions			

Use of Data for Making Decisions: School Improvement Planning			
Indicators	Significant Findings	AOS	AI
D 2.1 Compiling and using data/evidence from several sources to develop a profile of the school related to student performance			
D 2.2 Analyzing data/evidence related to the perceived limitations of instructional practices and organizational conditions to identify goals and objectives for school improvement planning			
D 2.3 Analyzing data over time to look for trends in student performance and to identify strengths and limitations of instructional programs and services			
D 2.4 Disaggregating state and local student performance data by appropriate subgroups of students to identify needs and monitor student progress	Data from small group reading instruction is analyzed to determine group composition and additional resources required.	✓	
D 2.5 Collecting and analyzing data/evidence on a regular, periodic basis to monitor plan implementation and to evaluate improvements over time			
D 2.6 Making data relevant to the implementation of school improvement strategies and initiatives available and accessible to staff			
D 2.7 Training staff in collecting and analyzing data to identify relevant goals and objectives for school improvement planning and to monitor the plan's implementation and evaluate improvements over time			

Comments

The committee enjoyed their visit to Valley Institute Elementary School on Feb. 24, 2009. The following Areas of Strength were noted:

1. Valley Institute Elementary School is commended for utilizing space, specifically space made available from the new addition. The use of space has given teachers the use of their classrooms for individual planning.
2. The facilities are clean and well maintained.
3. Teachers are commended for addressing target areas (5th grade History) with a school-wide cross curricular interdisciplinary approach.
4. Differentiated instruction strategies are being used as teachers continue to grow and improve in this area.
5. School rules and classroom expectations are well understood by students, demonstrated by exemplary student behavior.
6. A warm school climate mirrors the family atmosphere present in the school, which reflects a stable staff with few turnovers that works well together.
7. A low teacher:student ratio allows positive relationships and a caring environment.

8. Students indicate feeling safe and secure in their environment and reflect pride in their school.
9. The School Improvement Team (BLT) played an integral part in the goal setting and improvement process and the development of the school improvement plan.
10. Through classroom observations, it is evident that high expectations exist for all students.
11. Classroom observations reflect well-planned lessons and a wide variety of closure activities.
12. VIES is commended for outstanding scores on the Virginia Standards of Learning assessments, even though a lack of parent involvement and support continues to be an issue.
13. The use of inclusion is increasing throughout the building and has been effective with small reading groups.
14. VIES is implementing Response to Intervention (RtI) for struggling students with the addition of REACH (Raising Educational Abilities in Children) committee.

The following areas of possible growth were noted:

1. Explore ways to focus students attention on the lesson with opening activities designed to hook the students and set the expectation for learning.
2. Increase the variety and intensity of strategies and assessment techniques throughout the lesson to increase student engagement.
3. Incorporate the use of higher order thinking skills through questioning techniques which reflect upper levels of Bloom's Taxonomy.
4. Incorporate the use of available technology into daily lessons.
5. Provide staff development in the recognition of characteristics and identification of gifted students.
6. Minimize interruptions of class time.