MOVING YOUR NUMBERS

Brevard Public Schools: Achievement Profile

Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students With Disabilities as Part of District-wide Improvement

In collaboration with:
Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)

Supported by:
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About Moving Your Numbers

Moving Your Numbers: Improving Learning for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-wide Reform, examines how school districts with vastly different demographics increase the performance of students with disabilities and other at-risk learners as part of whole-district reform efforts. Case studies of featured districts, as described in the full report, provide evidence that students with disabilities, like all other students, can learn at higher levels when adults focus their collective efforts on improving instructional practice, consistently implement core work across the district, and use assessment and accountability as a lever for ongoing system and student learning and improvement.

Moving Your Numbers identifies six essential practices that must be in place to improve the performance of students with disabilities. Evidence suggests that these six practices, when used in an aligned and coherent manner, are associated with higher student achievement. These practices are use data well, focus your goals, select and implement shared instructional practices (individually and collectively), implement deeply, monitor and provide feedback and support, and inquire and learn.

Moving Your Numbers was initiated and is supported through the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) under the leadership of Dr. Martha Thurlow, NCEO Director; Rachel Quenemoen, NCEO Senior Research Fellow; and Dr. Laurene Christensen, NCEO Research Associate. Dr. Deborah Telfer, Director, School of Education and Allied Professions Grant Center, University of Dayton, coordinates the development and review of Moving Your Numbers on behalf of NCEO. NCEO was established in 1990 to provide national leadership in designing and building educational assessments and accountability systems that appropriately monitor educational results for all students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs).

Photographs used in this publication have been provided courtesy of the districts featured and the Ohio Department of Education.

Additional case studies of featured districts will be added to the Moving Your Numbers website as they are developed. Go to www.MovingYourNumbers.org for the complete report and additional tools and resources, and to submit success stories.

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“All kids can learn at significantly higher levels, we believe it!” stated Cynthia Van Meter, Associate Superintendent of Brevard Public Schools in Florida. As one of only three associate superintendents in a district that serves close to 73,000 children across a 75-mile stretch of east central Florida (known as Florida’s Space Coast), Van Meter is responsible for curriculum and instruction for every student across the district’s 113 schools. Brevard County Schools (BPS) is organized into three areas – north, central, and south – spanning 1,300 square miles and 16 municipalities.

Van Meter’s responsibilities include not only elementary, middle and secondary school programs, but also accountability, testing, and evaluation; adult and community education; career and technical education, and all student services, which encompass exceptional student education (ESE) services. This organizational scheme is not surprising, considering the district’s commitment to eliminating silos, using a common vision to guide the education of every child, and focusing first and foremost on student success.

BPS has been recognized for its achievements in a number of areas, including having 100% of its schools rated as “Grade A” schools by the state, being ranked second overall in the state by the Florida Department of Education, second in the state in graduation rate, and third in the nation for the percentage of teachers holding National Board certification. In 2005 and 2006, the district led the state in science in 5th and 11th grade assessments, had five of the top 10 elementary schools in the state, was in the top 10 in the state in each of the 22 areas of state assessment, led the state in the 10th grade writing exam, and had higher SAT scores than any other Florida school district. More recently, the state’s release of the 2011 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) scores – Florida's primary measure of student achievement of the Sunshine State Standards – showed that Brevard’s sixth grade students ranked first in Florida in both reading and mathematics, and in June the district was honored for the third consecutive year by the Association of School Business Officials for financial excellence.

These results are true for all groups of children. Karen Denbroeder of the Florida Department of Education’s Bureau of Exceptional Children and Student Services explained that beginning in 2004, Florida began to publicly recognize LEAs who demonstrated high rates of students with disabilities in general education classrooms coupled with high rates of proficiency on state assessment. “Brevard was one of the first school districts to be recognized. The State Department often refers other districts to Brevard when questions are asked about how to increase participation in general education classes,” said Denbroeder.

While district personnel may appreciate these accolades and others like them, they believe strongly as a group that their work is not done until every child is prepared for a productive life after graduation from BPS. And that means ensuring that every school across

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1 Economic Development Commission of Florida’s Space Coast, 2009.
the district is fully and consistently implementing those strategies the district believes will lead to preparing all students at significantly higher levels. “We’re never satisfied with where we are, we’re always reaching,” said Dr. Michael Miller, principal of Saturn Elementary School, a Florida Grade A school serving Pre-K through 6th graders in the central area of the district. Miller is also a finalist for the state’s Florida Literacy Awards in the category of Elementary Literacy Leadership Team of the Year.

A culture of higher expectations was fostered under the previous superintendent, who is credited with reshaping the district, leading to tremendous growth. “He got us to believe that hard work paid off,” said Secondary Programs Resource Teacher Patty Adams. Holding all adults in the district accountable for the success of all children remains a core value under the current administration, led by Superintendent Brian T. Binggeli. “Dr. Binggeli brings a data and accountability focus and expects all children, including students with disabilities and English language learners (ELL), to achieve and succeed at the same rate as all other children,” explained Sue Carver, director of Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Program Services.

**When “Less Is More”**

Since assuming leadership of the district in July of 2009, Dr. Binggeli’s emphasis on what the adults need to do to improve student outcomes has been instrumental in helping the district to become more intentional and focused around core work, beginning with maximizing student potential in core academic areas, closing achievement gaps, and ramping up the level of rigor and cognitive demand associated with content provided to all students. “Our district is committed to high-quality, research-based practices that improve outcomes for all students. Through our strategic planning process, a sustained focus on teaching and learning impacts

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**Operational Expectations**

**Goal 1: Student Achievement**
1. Maximize student potential in core area achievement.
2. Close Achievement gaps.
3. Deliver quality non-core area learning opportunities that provide students with a well-rounded education.
4. Promote student acquisition of 21st century skills.

**Goal 2: Safe, Healthy and Productive Work and Learning Environment**
1. Provide Adequate and appropriate facilities.
2. Maintain a safe work and learning environment.
3. Foster shared purpose and collaboration throughout the organization.

**Goal 3: Capable and Engaged Workforce**
1. Recruit and retain the highest quality staff.
2. Build leadership and job-related capacity at every level of the organization.
3. Promote continual learning and innovation through reasonable levels of autonomy, accountability and ownership.

**Goal 4: Fiscal Responsibility and Organizational Effectiveness**
1. Maintain effective and efficient resource management.
2. Utilize strategic panning that provides organizational focus and fosters continuous improvement.
3. Maintain effective school/community communication and partnerships.
student and teacher performance,” said Binggeli. While goals have been in existence for quite some time, it wasn’t until about 10 years ago that work began in earnest to develop a usable district plan.

Focus Your Goals. “We used to have many goals; now we are more strategically focused,” explained Dr. Walt Christy, Director of Secondary Programs. “It was exhausting,” added Randy LaRusso, ESE Resource Teacher and Alternate Assessment Coordinator. The district’s transition from what was described as “an enormous plan” to a few important goals (see Operational Expectations) provided a framework for aligning priorities in real ways. The district strategic plan, now used to guide core work across the system, is described by Van Meter as a living document that is reviewed annually. “There was a time when we knew there was a plan, it was out there. Now, I have to explain how what I want to do relates to the goals in the plan,” explained LaRusso. The most recent district strategic plan was approved by Brevard’s five-member board of education on September 28, 2010.

District-wide initiatives, such as the implementation of the district’s K-12 Literacy Plan, are directly aligned with district goals, school improvement plans are tied to district goals, and all staff members – approximately 9,000 of them – are expected to understand the relationship between what they do every day and the district’s expectations. “The district strategic plan drives what we do and how we use resources. We’re learning to focus on fewer things and do them well,” said Dr. Beth Thedy, formerly BPS Director of Middle School Programs, and now the Assistant Superintendent of Student Services.

The idea of fully implementing a few important things is, in itself, a major change in practice for the district. Schools have flexibility in going beyond the district’s four goals to meet the specific needs of the children they serve, but they must align their work, as represented in their school improvement plans (SIPs), with the district goals, and they are not permitted to replace district goals. “Before more was more; now, less is more,” said Stephanie Hall, principal of Sabal Elementary School, another Grade A school in the district. “By using the district strategic plan to respond to issues that arise out of daily conversations, we’re able to help all teachers and related personnel understand and focus their energy. This creates opportunities for dialogue among the staff and increases their collective capacity to continuously improve instruction and student learning,” said Hall.

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**Continuous Improvement Cycle**

- **Outcome Indicators**
  - (Target, Goals)
  - Connected to data – Identified need
  - S.M.A.R.T.
  - Survey
  - Students, parents, teachers
  - Measureable

- **Specific Work Plans**
  - Operationalize performance objectives
  - In-process monitor and measures
  - Drives action
  - Implementation timelines and responsibilities

- **Small Number of Action-Oriented Staff Performance Objectives**
  - Programmatic efforts
  - Delivery models/practices

- **Best Practice**
  - (Effective)
  - Connected to data – Identified need

- **Program/Practice Self-Analysis**
  - Connected to data – Identified need
  - Strengths
  - Areas for growth

- **Data Informed**

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**Mission:** To Serve Every Student with Excellence as the Standard.

**Vision:** Brevard Public Schools will serve our community and enhance students’ lives by delivering the highest quality education in a culture of dedication, collaboration, and learning.
How Florida’s Public Schools Are Graded

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elementary and Middle Schools</th>
<th>High Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100% of the grade based on scoring high on the FCAT and making annual learning gains.</td>
<td>50% of the grade based on scoring high on the FCAT and making annual learning gains*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Schools earn 1 point per content area for each percent of students scoring at 3, 4, or 5 in reading, math, and science; and points for scores on the FCAT writing exam (scored 1 to 6), based on the percent of students scoring 3 or higher, and the percent of students scoring 4 or higher.

Schools earn 1 point each for each percent of students who make learning gains in reading and math, with special attention given to gains among the lowest 25% at FCAT levels 1, 2, or 3 in each school.

Schools must test at least 90% of eligible students, and 95% to receive a grade of A.

*In addition to meeting learning gains for low-performing students and testing requirements, schools that would otherwise earn an “A” must meet a statewide target of 75% for the graduation rate of at-risk students or show sufficient (defined as 1% or more for schools with an at-risk graduation rate of at least 65%, and 5% for schools with an at-risk graduation rate below 65%) annual improvement in that rate.

Source: Florida Department of Education. Go to [http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcat2](http://fcat.fldoe.org/fcat2) for additional information.

Each of the four goals – or operational expectations – set by the district has a limited number of strategies and a short list of measurable outcome indicators associated with it. No strategy has more than eight indicators and, in most cases, there are fewer than five indicators used to gauge implementation of district strategies. The notion of less is really more resonates with district personnel who understand the challenges associated with implementing deeply any activity across a district with Brevard’s distinctive geographical footprint.

Getting – and staying – focused begins with effective data use. A variety of measures is used to continually assess the degree of implementation of strategies across the district and whether that implementation is having the desired effect on student learning. Brevard’s continuous improvement cycle begins with data, uses data at every step, and ends with an overall annual review of progress based on outcome indicator data collected over the course of the year. One outcome indicator under Goal 3 involves the incorporation, by 2012-13, of the BPS Continuous Improvement Model as part of personnel evaluation. Use of the BPS Continuous Improvement Model would be one of three indicators of the district’s progress in promoting “continual learning and innovation through reasonable levels of autonomy, accountability, and ownership.”

Use Data Well. “Accessibility of data has changed the conversation across the district,” affirmed Van Meter. In fact, one of the district’s operational beliefs is to “revere data that provide feedback to students, inform programmatic and instructional decisions, and support focused intervention efforts.” According to Neyda Francis, Assistant Director of

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### FCAT Reading:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total/Subgroup</th>
<th>Performance (School Year)</th>
<th>Percent Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Learners</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indicator should increase

### FCAT Math:

**Change in Percentage of Students Scoring at Level 3, 4, and 5 from 2002 to 2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total/Subgroup</th>
<th>Performance (School Year)</th>
<th>Percent Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Learners</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indicator should decrease

### FCAT Math:

**Change in Percentage of Students Scoring at Level 1 from 2002 to 2010**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total/Subgroup</th>
<th>Performance (School Year)</th>
<th>Percent Improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically Disadvantaged</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Learners</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with Disabilities</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indicator should increase

Florida’s student achievement level descriptors are provided in the box on the following page.
Accountability, Testing, & Evaluation, the development of a single sign-on learning management system that would provide teachers and principals access to descriptive statistics related to state, district, and local common assessments and teacher-made instruments is under way. A variety of materials aligned to district pacing guides and designed to support effective instruction (e.g., model lessons, video of colleagues delivering lesson-line elements, state assessment item banks, etc.) would also be available to support improvement in instructional practice across the district.

The district uses state assessment data (i.e., FCAT, Florida Alternate Assessment) and district-created benchmark assessments that are aligned with content standards and Brevard’s Effective Strategies for Teaching (BEST) to identify trends, prioritize areas of need, and monitor progress.

At the same time, elementary schools use the Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading (FAIR) three times per year, and the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener (FLKRS) to assess the school readiness of kindergarten students. Data are tracked against a Goal 1 indicator that states, “By 2013, 90% of all first grade students and 90% of all second grade students will demonstrate a high probability of success as measured by the third FAIR assessment.” A data dashboard, a desktop student data system, and SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analyses are used by the district, and every teacher receives data on last year’s students, as well as the children assigned to them for the current year. A commercial product is used to provide access to individual student data for all staff working with the student. This product is being modified to incorporate response to intervention (RtI) progress monitoring data, and running records are used to monitor the progress of struggling students. With the exception of district assessment and the use of FAIR, teachers have discretion in how they use other assessment tools.

District personnel acknowledge that the use, across the district, of collaboratively developed and scored common classroom assessments is inconsistent; however, a more structured and system-wide approach to promoting teacher use of formative assessment, aligned with BEST,
is being developed and all staff will be trained in its use. Another Goal 3 outcome indicator states “By 2015, 90% of Brevard’s schools will be recognized as national models of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) at Work.” As PLCs are established in schools, the use of common assessments that are collaboratively developed and used by teacher teams will become the norm.

State assessment data suggest that the rate of improvement in the percentage of all BPS students scoring at levels 3, 4, or 5 on the FCAT is matched or exceeded by students with disabilities and English language learners. For example, while the percent improvement in math from 2002 to 2010 for all students was 14%, students with disabilities improved by 20%. Further evidence of growth for all student groups is provided by the reduction in the percentage of students scoring at FCAT Level 1, with the percentage of all students decreasing by 8% and the percentage of students with disabilities and English language learners decreasing by 20% and 13%, respectively.

Randy LaRusso, Alternate Assessment Coordinator for BPS, reports that .67 of the district’s tested students in grades assessed participate in alternate assessment, a percentage that is lower than other districts, many of whom BPS officials say request waivers to exceed the allowable one percent of students with significant cognitive disabilities who participate in alternate assessment (i.e., students whose cognitive impairments may prevent them from attaining grade-level achievement standards, even with the very best instruction). “A natural consequence of the hard work the schools do, and the support they receive from Resource Teachers Lisa Rogers and Patty Adams, is that more and more teachers and principals say ‘why not bring this kid along too?’ As a result, we have a population of children that could take the alternate assessment, but instead participate in the regular assessment. The district may take the hit for that, but we do it because it’s the right thing to do for kids,” explained LaRusso.

Adams concurs, and offers several examples of children no one thought could ever achieve at grade level. “We found two students sitting there and we said, ‘let’s just see if they’re able to perform, we’re going to try it.’” One, a student with Down Syndrome, is now performing at grade level and LaRusso reports that he is not in a modified program. “We’re changing what people think kids with significant cognitive disabilities can and should learn; my job every day is to convince people to give it a try, give it a go, with kids,” said LaRusso.

“Principals cannot transform a school through their individual efforts. Creating a professional learning community is a collective effort, but that effort has little chance of success without effective leadership from the principal.”

Guiding the Journey: Structures & Practices that Promote System-wide Improvement

“We know that not all adults believe that all kids can learn at higher levels, or that the use of PLCs is a strategy that can be used to improve instruction for all kids, but there are more in this journey with us than not,” added LaRusso. That journey starts with shared responsibility for student success. “No one department is responsible for student success, we all are. Everyone has a role in improving results for every child,” said Van Meter. “We work together as a team,” she added.

At the district level, senior staff members from every department across the district meet regularly with the superintendent. Also at the district level, a district leadership team meets regularly and includes the superintendent, area and assistant superintendents, and every principal and district director. At the school level, buildings have leadership teams that include guidance counselors, teacher leaders, and literacy coaches. At the classroom/teacher level, PLCs are in place across elementary schools and, in most buildings, every grade has a team. Special education or ESE teachers are included as regular members of PLCs. Binggeli explains, “district and school administrators, instructional and support staff, and community stakeholders are dedicated to establishing an improvement process that identifies the needs of students and to developing and executing a plan to meet those needs. The district will continually monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the plan to determine our success in achieving desired results.”

Monitor and Provide Feedback and Support. Leadership teams at each level are used to foster shared responsibility for student success, and support a more collective and strategic approach to addressing identified needs. At Saturn Elementary School, for example, PLCs at each grade level meet regularly, and also meet once a week – every Thursday for 45 minutes – with Principal Michael Miller. “The culture in the building has changed so much and accountability is the impetus for changing the culture. When I talk to a teacher about a specific kid, the teacher knows that child in and out. Teachers really know how to use data to drive instruction,” described Miller. When I first became a principal, I looked at data but it wasn’t a major thing. The district trained principals to use data; I felt supported,” said Miller. In BPS, principals report to their area superintendent.

Serving a working class community, about 74% of Saturn’s students qualify for free/reduced lunch, while almost 30% receive special education services. All of Saturn’s students with disabilities are educated in regular education classrooms, and care is taken to ensure that services are based on the instructional needs of the students. “We’ve stopped looking at eligibility labels for instructional purposes,” said LaRusso. “Instruction is based on what the kid needs to learn, not the label,” she said.

Lisa Rogers, ESE Resource Teacher
As noted by Superintendent Binggeli, data are used to identify those needs on an ongoing basis, and to monitor the implementation of instructional strategies by groups of teachers. Teachers use the time to provide feedback and support to each other. “The highly effective teams chart progress,” said Miller. “We saw a big gap and had to ask ourselves, how can we expect students with disabilities to perform at the same level when they don’t have access to the curriculum and materials?” explained Miller, who is certified in the areas of elementary education, early childhood education, mental retardation, ESOL, and administration and supervision.

Recognized by BPS as the 2008-09 Principal of the Year, Miller has worked with teachers to move the school from a grade of “C” to an A-rated school designated as the 25th Glasser Quality School in the nation and a model school for PLCs. He credits their — not his — success to the district’s requirement that principals put structures in place to support teachers coming together. “Elementary principals are held accountable for meeting, not just as a PLC, but as a team using a structured, data-based process for monitoring instructional effectiveness,” said Miller.

**Select and Implement Shared Instructional Practices.** “We want all children to have BEST, the district’s core instructional program,” said Van Meter. Initiated in 2009, BEST is a research-based, integrated professional development instructional model and related training program. The elements of lesson study and effective use of formative assessment will be incorporated into BEST using Race to the Top (RttT) funds and all teachers and teacher teams will be trained in their use beginning summer 2011. Extended follow up and support will be implemented through PLCs as a way to embed ongoing PD and promote shared instructional practices within and across schools.

“We live in the research,” said Resource Teacher Lisa Rogers, who has worked extensively with Adams to demonstrate co-teaching, how to increase student engagement and differentiating delivery of instructional content to all children. Rogers explains “all teachers have an important role to play in providing solid core instruction to all children. There are no silos in this district; expectations are so high.”

LaRusso, in describing the district’s clear direction and drive for continual improvement states, “we ask, ‘is really good instruction good enough?’”

**Targeted PD and Intentional Resource Use.** Viewing all children as regular education children first required the district to be intentional in its expectations and actions. “At one time there was a separation between special education and regular education teachers. Now, the expectation is that they perform at the same level. This shift began in 2003-04 when we made a decision to include all teachers in everything we do as a district,” explained Director of Elementary Programs Dr. Lynn Spadaccini. “There was a time when we used to ask if special education teachers could be involved in PDs. Now no one asks; it’s the way we do business,” she added.
The strategic use of PD to improve teaching and learning is supported by the Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System (FDLRS), a statewide network that provides support for exceptional education teachers, regular education teachers with ESE students in their classrooms, parents, and agency personnel. Sharon Tolson, Director of BPS Federal Projects within the Student Services department, oversees the PD provided to improve the quality of instruction provided to all students. In addition to PD that is provided to schools that don’t make the “A” grade, and PD related to district initiatives such as the K-12 literacy plan, Tolson works with district directors to provide opportunities for school-to-school learning. “When schools make goals, we use the group. We bring schools together and facilitate role-alike sessions so they can learn from each other,” said Tolson.

Miller, who uses the same kind of approach to foster shared practice and learning among teachers, explained “we used the data to identify the most effective 2nd grade math teachers and provided opportunities for other teachers to learn from them. Now we’re working on putting particular strategies in place across all 2nd grade classrooms,” he said.

All PD is tracked through the FDLR network, explained Tolson, which requires a data-based approach to determine the effectiveness of the PD provided. “We get feedback from teachers on whether the PD they participate in has had an effect on student achievement. This forces them to look at the data,” she added.

Two district-wide initiatives – the K-12 Literacy Plan and Secondary Schools of National Prominence – were used by the district to establish a framework for articulating high expectations for all children and staff. The K-12 literacy plan articulated the same expectations for all children, while the Secondary Schools of National Prominence identified strategies for ensuring that every child

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**Focus on Continuous Learning**

According to Darling-Hammond (2010), district central offices must “create a new paradigm” in which the role of the district and central office must shift:

- From enforcing procedures to building school capacity
- From managing compliance to managing improvement
- From rewarding staff for following orders and ‘doing things right’ to rewarding staff for getting results by ‘doing the right things’
- From rationing educational opportunities to expanding successful programs
- From ignoring (and compounding) failure in schools serving the least powerful to allocating resources to ensure their success


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would be career, workforce, or college ready, resulting in the development of a program of study for every child. “We test every 11th grader with ACT and develop a service plan for each student – it’s an equity issue,” said Christy.

Intentional use of resources to address identified needs has also been a factor in improving student achievement. For example, when a review of third-grade student assessment did not show as much progress as the district expected or wanted, dollars were targeted to provide PD to K-2 teachers around specific strategies. At the same time, a Summit for all elementary principals was held to review relevant research and provide principals with strategies for how to support teachers in implementing specific strategies, said Spadaccini. “The superintendent is committed to ensuring that budget cuts don’t affect what happens in the classroom. He’s trying to protect the schools so that cuts affect the central office first,” said Van Meter.

Inquire and Learn. BPS’ commitment to continuous improvement is grounded in high expectations at every level, and a spirit of inquiry and learning. That inquiry and learning process requires teachers, principals, and central office personnel work together meet the district’s Goal 2 strategy of building “leadership and job-related capacity at every level of the organization.” By 2012-13, the district will incorporate employee learning as a required and monitored component of the evaluation process (Outcome Indicator 3.2.2). “We believe so strongly in the need for teachers to work together, to share instructional practices, that we’re building into our teacher evaluation system a component to assess how they behave and function as part of PLCs,” Miller explained.

Time seems to be the greatest challenge. “Finding time, especially at the secondary level, is an issue,” said Christy. “We’re thinking about the requirement coming for all kids to take and pass Algebra 2 and pass it as a condition of graduation. We’re thinking about how to get to that next level of performance to ensure that all kids can graduate, knowing there’s variability in the amount of time kids will need to be successful with the content.” In response, the district personnel refer to organizational focus, as measured by functionality and effectiveness of the district plan, to stay on track, continue to learn and improve, and excel at ever-increasing levels.
A Relentless Pursuit: What Matters Most

The district’s attention to developing a culture of dedication, collaboration, and learning is paying off. A relentless pursuit of excellence in the quality of the instruction provided to all students is evident in the way district personnel describe their collective work and mission. While numerous achievements and accomplishments highlight the progress BPS has made in preparing every child across a large and complex district, district leadership – which includes not only central office personnel but also principals and teachers – is quick to list everything they need to do in the coming months to not only sustain improvements, but to reach that next higher level of performance.

But school districts don’t exist in a vacuum. Florida’s Space Coast is expected to experience a population increase of 100,000 to 300,000 people by 2020, a potential increase of 60%. At the same time, the elimination of the NASA space shuttle program and its implications for Brevard’s economy is generating some anxiety among district personnel. “We’re waiting for the shoe to drop and asking ourselves, what do we need to do to prepare for an increasing number of children with greater needs,” said Patty Adams. “We’re also working with all community agencies in Brevard County to address increasing poverty rates, increases in low birth weight, and related health issues that have implications for education,” said Tolson.

Focusing on primary math, aligning standards with the Common Core, addressing instructional issues related to overage middle school students, and ensuring that all staff understand and use the Brevard Effective Teaching Strategies (BEST) as the district’s common language of instruction are among the immediate next steps for BPS during the 2011-12 school year. And, as a group, district leadership is up to the challenge, referring to their operational beliefs – zero tolerance for destructive negativism, and conviction and intense dedication to the mission of teaching and learning.

Advice from Brevard Public Schools

1. Develop a common vision to guide work across the district, and “feed” it.
2. Use data at all levels to identify needs and gauge progress.
3. Align everything you do with the district strategic plan.
4. Focus all work across the district to meet district-wide goals and strategies.
5. Don’t give lip service to teamwork – be a real team.
6. Use the expertise around you.
7. Always reach to the next level; never be satisfied with where you are.

For additional information about the BPS story, contact Mrs. Cynthia Van Meter, Associate Superintendent, Curriculum & Instruction, 2700 Judge Fran Jamieson Way, Viera, FL 32940 at 321.633.1000 or via email at VanMeterC@brevard.k12.fl.us.
Available MOVING YOUR NUMBERS Publications:

- Administrator Preparation Guide: Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-wide Improvement.
- District Self-Assessment Guide for Moving Our Numbers: Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-Wide Improvement.
- Moving Your Numbers: A Synthesis of Lessons Learned from Districts Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-Wide Improvement.
- Moving Your Numbers: Five Districts Share How They Used Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-Wide Improvement.
- Moving Your Numbers: The Critical Role of Regional Providers in Facilitating School District Capacity to Improve Achievement for Students with Disabilities.
- Moving Your Numbers: The Critical Role of SEAs in Facilitating School District Capacity to Improve Achievement for Students with Disabilities.
- Parent/Family Companion Guide: Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-Wide Improvement.
- Teacher Preparation Guide: Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-Wide Improvement.

For More Information on Moving Your Numbers, Contact NCEO or Visit: movingyournumbers.org

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