LEARNING HOW TO LEARN: *SST 7 and Bucyrus City Schools Partner in the Development of a District-wide Culture of Inquiry and Learning*

In 2009, the Bucyrus City Schools embarked on a continuous improvement process as a district, developing a five-year plan that was intended to make improvements across a variety of goal areas. The effort, which current personnel believe broke down longstanding barriers to shared learning, highlighted the importance of using data as part of improvement planning. Over the past six years, Bucyrus – with the assistance of State Support Team (SST) Region 7 personnel – has evolved as a learning community with greater focus on the impact that adults have on student performance.

FROM COMPLIANCE TO COMMITMENT

District and school personnel in Bucyrus City Schools learned a lot from the district's early actions to change district culture, including what worked well, and what got in the way of sustainable improvement. Matt Henderson – in his third year as the Bucyrus director of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, as well as the district's Ohio Improvement Process (OIP) internal facilitator – previously served as associate principal and principal of secondary schools in the district. "We've come to the understanding that how we support student learning depends on how we address adult learning in the district, from preschool through high school teacher-based teams," explained Henderson. "Promoting a high level of learning for adults will impact student learning," he added.

Focusing on adult professional practice, rather than viewing low performance as deficits that are inherent in children, reflects the evolution of Bucyrus as a district committed to continual learning. Dr. Mark Burke, Principal of Bucyrus' grades 6-12 secondary schools, explains: "Using OLAC resources and with the support of SST 7, we began changing the mindset of staff by looking at data differently and using a systematic process of finding where kids are and where they need to go. Before, we used to say, 'these kids didn't do this,' or 'this class did not do well,' always focusing on what students couldn't do and where they came from. Now we're building strong teams and looking at the performance of all children and what we do as adults to make the difference."

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> OIP Internal Facilitator
> Bucyrus City Schools

"We've progressed from using a top-down approach in 2009 that forced staff to look at data, but they did it because they were required to do it. We were happy with numbers on paper, but that's as far as it got. It wasn't about making a difference in the classroom; it was about compliance only," recalled Burke. Henderson concurs, describing the initial five-year plan as one that was developed using "a true strategic planning model with so many goals outside of the instructional program that didn't have an explicit

connection to what we were trying to grow as a learning community." "There were about 60 community members and a lot of staff doing a lot of work, but we were the 'jack of all trades' and we weren't seeing results. We've tried to weed out the goals that don't have a direct impact in the classroom and foster an environment of commitment. Nothing is successful if it's done from a compliance mindset," added Burke. Now, the district has a single district-wide plan, which is structured around one focused goal – the use of integrated comprehensive services (ICS) to improve instructional practice and student learning.[1]

Bucyrus City Schools
OIP Single Goal District Action Plan
June 2015- June 2018

DISTRICT GOAL

Goal 1:
By the end of the 2015-2018 improvement cycle, **BCS PreK-12 students will be embedded in an integrated comprehensive services model** as measured by district created measures and an increase in its Performance Index score from the baseline of 92.5 (2014LRC) to 97 with an annual benchmark target of a 1.5 point increase [2016 = 94; 2017 = 95.5; 2018 = 97]

Strategy 1.1: Create, implement, and monitor aligned systems structures and supports for district-wide integrated service models at all levels [TBT, BLT, DLT]

Adult Implementation Indicator: 100% of BCS educators will **implement integrated comprehensive service practices with fidelity**. They will monitor the impact of adult implementation of ICS on all subgroups, through multiple DLT and BLT-identified measures.

Student Performance Indicator: 100% of BCS students will perform at a proficient or higher level on identified district, school, or grade-level rubrics through the use of goal-setting, progress monitoring and self-reporting grading strategies.

1.1.1: Provide HQPD and follow up support (including monitoring) on ICS understandings and strategies, to include: co-teaching (co-plan and co-serve), Universal Design for Learning (UDL-first teach), Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports (PBIS), and their application in the classroom setting to support Early Intervention needs, IEPs, 504s, RIMPs, Success Plans, Transition Plans, and College and Career Readiness Initiatives.
1.1.2: Utilize the Ohio Improvement Leadership Development protocols [through DLT and TBTs] to determine and practice BCS' integrated service model.
1.1.3: Create, roll out, and monitor the impact of a plan for communicating the district plan (ICS goal) to all stakeholders [staff, students, parents, community] and enlisting parents and community members as education partners.

IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES AND INDICATORS

ACTION STEPS

Strategy 1.2: Develop, implement and monitor systems, structures and supports that create and hold firm the belief that all students deserve and are entitled to a high quality education inclusive of rigorous, inquiry-based methods and curricula.

Adult Implementation Indicator: 100% of PreK-12 teachers will use high quality instructional practices to develop students who can use inquiry strategies and critical thinking skills to master content standards, measured through TBT- and BLT-evaluated high quality assessments and further evaluated through the performance index calculation model.

Student Performance Indicator: 100% of BCS students will use self-monitoring and goal setting skills to self-report current achievement levels on content standards and course expectations.

1.2.1: Provide professional development and follow up support (including monitoring) on Performance Index Calculation strategies and goal setting.
1.2.2: Provide professional development and follow-up support (including monitoring) on high impact instructional strategies, specifically to include "self-reported grades" *Phase two focus: Assessment*
1.2.3: Facilitate curriculum alignment and curriculum mapping in all grade levels to identify gaps, instructional strategies, student activities, and appropriate assessments which will help gauge impact on achievement. Phase One Focus: Math and Early Literacy.

Using state-sponsored opportunities. The Bucyrus City Schools is designated as a cohort 2 district for purposes of participating in professional development (PD) offered through Ohio's State Personnel Development Grant (SPDG). SPDG PD is grounded in the state's improvement framework as defined by the Ohio Improvement Process (OIP) and the Ohio Leadership Advisory Council (OLAC) essential areas of practice. "Bucyrus has spent the majority of its time rebooting the OIP process," explained SST 7 Assistant Director Ed Kapel – one of two SST 7 staff members assigned to Bucyrus. "They had a groundswell and realization at the top that what they were trying wasn't really working on its own," added Kapel.

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[1] ICS, developed by Colleen Capper and Elise Frattura, is organized around four cornerstones as illustrated above and defines comprehensive services as the array of services and supports, centered in differentiated curriculum and instruction, that all students receive to ensure academic and behavioral success. all learners.

"The OLAC resources and the OIP 5-Step Process helped us focus and drill down into the core of what we were trying to accomplish in ways that made sense to us," said Henderson. Bucyrus' involvement in SPDG supported them in more effectively using OIP-OLAC, not as a compliance tool, but rather as a support for focusing the district's work and bringing adults at all levels together through participation on aligned leadership teams. It also introduced the district to the benefits of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in planning for and delivering instruction to all students, including those with diverse learning needs; and to a different way of thinking about equity and social justice using the constructs of ICS.

"SST 7 helped us shape what our OIP plan looked like and how it evolved into our unique plan on a page concept; it's all grounded in OLAC and 'sprinkled' with spices from our SPDG work," quipped Henderson. Burke – in his 15th year in the district, having served as a teacher, dean of students, assistant principal, director of student services, and now secondary principal – added, "We have a singular focus on how what we do will impact and move students. We follow Matt and the superintendent because they lead by example; none of this would be successful without a change in environment and reducing down to one goal with a singular focus."

Promoting shared leadership. Bucyrus uses the leadership team structures that are embedded in the OIP-OLAC framework. Its district leadership team (DLT) is comprised of the superintendent; director of curriculum, instruction and assessment; the director of student services; a high school science teacher, a middle school English/language arts teacher, a 2nd grade teacher, and a 4th grade intervention specialist, both principals (i.e., elementary and secondary) in the district; and SST 7 representatives Ed Kapel and Julie Frankl. The DLT holds regular quarterly meetings and also meets around focused work (e.g., reviewing the new Decision Framework tool), attends PD together, and/or presents as a team at conferences, such as *Connect for Success*.

Building leadership teams (BLTs) meet monthly and the teacher-based teams (TBTs) meet weekly. At the secondary level, TBTs meet for one hour every Wednesday made possible by an early release. While

2014-2015 District Leadership Team (DLT) Practice Profile - <mark>EXCERPT</mark>

Learning Organization - An organization in which all adults continually involved in a collaborative learning process that improves teaching for the purpose of increased student achievement.

TARGET PERFORMANCE	TAKE NOTES ON POTENTIAL ACTIONS THAT WOULD IMPROVE THE TEAM'S PERFORMANCE LEVEL	POSSIBLE BARRIERS TO PROGRESS
The DLT creates a learning organization by building the collective capacity of the district through the following: 1. The DLT identifies data-driven needs and probable causes in order to create, refine, and/or implement the action steps of the Focused Plan that reflect the delivery of professional development. 2. The framework for providing professional development is based on district/building identified needs. Some examples of the professional development priority areas may include: **Climate and conditions:** establish a culture of respect, personal regard, competence, and integrity for all staff, students, and families. **Assessment literacy:** the knowledge and skills needed to gather accurate information about student achievement and use the assessment process and results to effectively improve achievement. **Research/evidence-based instruction:** including differentiation, inclusive practices, effective instructional strategies, Ohio's Learning Standards, etc. to meet the needs of all learners **Data collection and analysis:** monitor the BLTs' effective implementation of the district's curriculum, assessment and instructional practices, and climate/expectations. 3. The DLT supports BLTs by implementing the following: i. Job-embedded training and support in the 5-Step Process and associated procedures, protocols, and processes for teams who are struggling, new staff members, as well as the continued growth of all teams. I. Multiple opportunities for practicing new instructional strategies II. Coaching in the 5-Step Process that includes opportunities for observation and formal feedback. 4. Through the DLT's analysis of adult implementation data and its impact on student performance data, future targets for professional development are identified, planned, implemented, monitored, and evaluated.		A. The DLT provides no professional development to BLTs/TBTs. B. The DLT does not use data to identify the district's professional development needs. C. Professional development needs are not aligned with either the district's priorities or common instructional needs. D. The district climate does not reflect respect, personal regard, competence, and integrity for all staff, students, and families. E. Opportunities for observations or feedback for BLTs/TBTs from the DLT are few or do not exist. F. The DLT does not focus on instructional improvement.

structures are in place, Henderson acknowledges that the teams are functioning at different levels. "We're working to improve TBTs and BLTs through the use of practice profiles. I'm responsible for the DLT and we use information from the district profile – for example, what are we doing well, what needs improvement, what are areas that don't currently exist – to identify the PD supports that are needed to address areas of weakness." The district has been intentional in its use of tools like the practice profiles at the district, building, and teacher team levels, and the Ohio 5-Step Process, to reflect on what's happening across all levels in the district. "We've worked through communication avenues up and down the system," said Henderson.

Bucyrus, through its use of OIP-OLAC and its participation as a SPDG district, is systematically working to build capacity in several key areas aligned with its overall focus on the impact adults are having and can have on student outcomes. These areas include: (a) developing assessment-capable learners, (b) developing a growth mindset coupled with an emphasis on effective instructional strategies using Hattie's *Visible Learning for Teachers* resource, (c) UDL, (d) deconstructing standards, and (e) using a stricter co-teaching model wherein teacher partners attend PD on collaborative, cooperative, and inquiry-based learning as a team. "We're trying to build the capacity of all educators in the district, from PK through grade 12, to understand all the components of our work that we value and have everyone become willing learners in the process," explained Henderson.

> "Meaningful change comes from what we decide to do together as a collective."
>
> Dr. Mark Burke
> Secondary Principal
> Bucyrus City Schools

"I'm my harshest critic, but I feel we've made progress as a district by first helping people understand that the five-step process was not about the document they had to fill in, but rather about using the process to look at where we were successful, where we failed, and what we're going to do to ensure that we make lessons accessible to all students," said Burke. "We're more mindful now; instead of teaching to the middle and leaving the margins behind, we're focused on reaching every student, including students with disabilities, students identified as gifted, and the lowest performing 20 percent of our students," he added. TBTs at the secondary level are learning to self-regulate, reflect, monitor, and change without BLT intervention. BLTs are spending more time supporting TBTs and planning PD and less time on what Burke would characterize as administrative functions.

In keeping with *Ohio's Leadership Development Framework* (BASA, 2013), Bucyrus views leadership as a shared endeavor and the responsibility of all personnel at all levels of the system, regardless of individual role. Burke exemplifies this belief. He explains: "My job is to help leaders lead. When the BLT started to take ownership, my job was to step back, let them make decisions, and let them learn from it. I'm here to facilitate, guide, support, and praise when we succeed." "Meaningful change comes from what we decide to do together as a collective," summarized Burke.

The Power of Trust

Burke and Henderson credit the district's progress to the support and opportunities provided by SST 7. "Ed and Julie are good about saying, 'have you considered trying this?' or 'let's take this risk,'" said Henderson. "Sometimes you don't want a coach, you just want an answer, but Ed and Julie aren't willing to do that; they coach us into taking risks, into doing things that are different than we've done before. Sometimes that disrupts the apple cart, but they don't wash their hands of it; they stay with it and us," added Henderson.

Burke agrees, saying that SST 7 "is looking at my best interest. They give us tremendous opportunities, and never try to force anything down our throats. When I hear that I have to do something, it sets me off. They let us work through the process. There's a level of trust, they're a part of us, not an outside agency that's here to monitor us."

Rather than using an expert model, SST 7 consultants work across areas to support district learning and progress. Every opportunity is taken to support professional learning through and during DLT and BLT meetings, through other forms of job-embedded PD, and through coaching. "SST 7 supports us in what we're trying to do to become a learning community and they come at the drop of a hat. They revise their schedules when we need them, and they show that they care," said Henderson.

Trust is equally important at the building level according to Burke. "Being responsive to building needs and letting people know that their feedback is valued and that it's heard builds trust," he said. One change that was made as a result of the secondary BLT's recommendation was to restructure the middle school schedule to offer a blocked course of mathematics – changing the number of minutes of math instruction provided to all children from 45 to 82 minutes each day. "You just can't overstate how important trust is in the building," stated Burke.

Bucyrus District Leadership Team: Developing a Focused Plan…Learn, Think and Plan Together

Co-Facilitators: Matt Henderson BCS, Julie Frankl SST7

June 8-9, 2015

BUCYRUS CITY SCHOOLS *Developing Life Long Learners.*

State Support Team 7

Intended Outcomes:

- Integrate all district initiatives
- Develop a culture of inquiry
- Integrate services for all students
- Create a new, 3-year District Level focused plan

June 8, 2015 12:00-3:00 PM

12:00-12:05 – Welcome and Introductions; Graphic of Stages and Our Path in the Process

Tools: Resource 2: OIP Stages

12:05-3:00 – Becoming a Learning Organization

12:05-12:25 Prioritizing the Garden (Teams of 3-4)

Tools: Sticky Notes, Program Initiative Audit Sheets

12:25-12:50 Background Knowledge Jigsaw (Teams of 4; read 5 for "What do we need to know to be able to build a good plan?" share 5)

Materials:

Member 1: Becoming a Learning Org. & PPT slides 4, 7, 8,9,10 (page 2)

Member 2: 90-90-90 Lessons & PPT slides 3, 4, 5 (page 3)

Member 2: Improv. Inst. Pract. Dist. PPT slides 7, 10,13,14,15 (page4)

Member 3: Understanding the 3 S's and 3-column sheet (page 5)

12:50-1:05 BREAK

1:05-2:05 Data Gallery Activity (Teams of 3-4)

Tools: DF Expanded Questions; District Data; highlighters, sticky notes

1:05-1:45--Task: Spend 9 mins. /station, reviewing, asking questions, determining red flags and celebrations worth

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The SST's perspective. "Our philosophy with all districts is not to provide information through 'sit and get' PD, but to be embedded in the districts we serve," explained Kapel. When we have districts come in for training, we make sure intervention specialists and content-area teachers work together, and then we're back in the district to observe, follow up to see that what was learned is being implemented, and to provide feedback. We wouldn't be successful if we trained people and then said 'goodbye,'" said Kapel.

Kapel shares Burke and Henderson's belief that trust is essential. "If you don't establish trust with districts before you spout your knowledge, you're done," he said. SST 7, located in north central Ohio, provides services in the areas of district/school improvement, exceptional children, and early learning and school readiness, to more than 40 regular public school districts and about 50 other educational organizations in the counties of Ashland, Crawford, Huron, Knox, Marion, Medina, Morrow, Richland, Seneca, and

Wyandot. In reflecting on the work that Bucyrus City Schools has been engaged in for several years, Kapel identified what he believes are the key elements of the district's progress:

- Focusing on shared leadership

- Using data effectively in all cases and at all levels

- Providing time for TBTs to meet on a regular and frequent basis

- Focusing all PD on instructional practices

- Providing feedback from the DLT, to the BLT, to TBTs

- Aligning all work with the district focused plan and ensuring that multiple, separate plans are not developed

- Taking advantage of OLAC resources and other resources available to the district

- Being transparent about the priorities and the work and never hiding anything

For More Information

For more information about the ways in which SST 7 has supported district-wide improvement in Bucyrus and other districts in its region, contact Ed Kapel, Assistant Director, SST Region 7 at 419.747.4808 or via email at ekapel@ncoesc.org.

For information about Bucyrus City School's work to improve outcomes and results for all learners, contact Matthew Henderson, Director of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment for the Bucyrus City Schools, at 419.562.4045 (ext. 3224) or via email at mhenderson@bucyrusschools.org.

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Frattura, E. M., & Capper, C. A. (2007). *Leading for social justice: Transforming schools for all learners*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Hattie, J. (2012). *Visible learning for teachers: Maximizing impact on learning.* New York, NY: Routledge.