

# PLEASANTS COUNTY SCHOOLS

*WHERE ALL students will leave career and college ready to take their place and succeed in our global society.*

## Core Beliefs

1. We believe our highest priority should be to provide an accessible, clean, safe environment in which students can maximize their learning potential.
2. We believe our schools should embrace a positive school culture and should promote academic growth and, professional and personal integrity.
3. We believe the education of our students is a partnership among community, schools, parents, and students.
4. We believe clear communication is vital to the success of the system.

## STRATEGIC FOCUS

2016-2017

### Priority 1 – Improving Outcomes for Students

Fidelity to Core Instruction through Utilization of College & Career Readiness Standards  
Assessment for Learning  
Instructional Practices Inventory (IPI)  
Instructional Skills and Strategies for High Quality Instruction (APL)  
Instructional Support and Enhancements in Mathematics and Reading  
9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Level Academies and Teacher Looping Model  
Improving Student Attendance

### Priority 2 – Improving District Operations & Accountability

Distributive Leadership as a Driving Force  
Educator Evaluation System for Teachers, Counselors and Principals  
Communication Through Collaborative Conversations  
Measuring Performance Data & Monitoring Leading & Lagging Indicators  
Monitoring Focus on Strategic Goals & Implementation of Identified Action Steps



## Priority 1 – Improving Outcomes for Students

### **College & Career Readiness Standards**

The WV College & Career Readiness Standards describe the destination that schools and students are expected to reach, but by themselves have little power to affect change. These standards have been written to be broad statements that define the knowledge, skills and understanding all students must demonstrate in a content area at the end of the kindergarten through college career readiness sequence of study. Teachers must understand standards are not meant to be mastered in one learning opportunity, that students require common, clear learning targets and the rigor of the curriculum is identified in the skills students are learning not the standards. Educators must become proficient in their ability to identify embedded learning targets in the standard so that nothing essential is missed during instruction. They must be able to articulate what students should know, understand and be able to do in order to demonstrate mastery of the standard. Accordingly, teachers must be able to sequence the targets into developmentally appropriate learning progressions. By deconstructing or clarifying learning targets, we take a broad standard and break it into smaller more explicit learning targets.

### **Assessment for Learning**

The purpose of classroom assessment is to support student learning and to use data to inform instructional pacing, design and differentiation. In order to support student learning, classroom assessment needs to involve students deeply in the assessment process, provide specific, descriptive feedback during the learning, and include evaluative feedback as required to communicate and report progress over time. Highly effective teachers recognize when students are deeply involved in the classroom assessment process and become more aware of their strengths and areas needing improvement. Only then are they likely to take action to close the gap between where they are in their learning and where they need to be. Teachers and administrators must embrace the purpose of assessment as a tool to inform instruction on a daily basis.

### **Instructional Practices Inventory**

The primary purpose of the Instructional Practice Inventory (IPI) is to develop a school-wide picture of student learning practices that could serve as the basis for faculty reflection and instructional improvement. This school-wide picture is really a snapshot of instruction across an entire school for a specified period of time, usually a day. The process is designed to provide an “optimum” snapshot, with every effort made to present the best picture of learning on a typical school day. Each school in Pleasants County has trained administrators and professional educators. Teams across the district will be expected to complete four IPIs per school year and to utilize the data gathered to improve instructional practices central to student engagement and increasing rigor.

### **Instructional Skills and Strategies for High Quality Instruction (APL)**

The practice of teaching is multi-faceted and requires an educator to understand pedagogy, assessment for learning and core content. However, the great divide between a struggling teacher and a mentor teacher often lies with classroom management. Educators in our school district are expected to become practitioners of the APL strategies outlined in the district implementation pacing guide. Central to those strategies include but are not limited to classroom conditions, serial positioning, bell ringers, anticipatory set, wait time, think/pair-share, checking for understanding, note taking, etc. Instructional leaders (principals) are expected to model, mentor and monitor implementation to ensure fidelity.

### **Instructional Support and Enhancements in Mathematics and Reading**

Pleasants County Schools has maintained an ongoing effort to provide students and teachers with effective research-based instructional tools and resources to augment learning. Most recently, additional digital learning tools have been implemented to support literacy at the elementary and middle school levels including but not limited to Headsprout Reading A-Z Learning, Lexia Core5 Reading, Reading Plus and Accelerated Reader. Each digital tool provides a degree of differentiation, remediation and acceleration. Students rate of learning in reading are assessed through benchmark assessments facilitated by STAR Early Literacy and STAR Reading at the beginning, middle and end of the school year. At the elementary level students' rates of learning are also progressed monitored through 95% Group's PASI and PSI, as well as other screeners. This school year, our preschool students will be exposed to Read It Again curricular supplement designed to develop and strengthen young children's early foundations in language and literacy. This supplement provides a systemic, explicit and flexible approach to building students' skills in four key areas of language and literacy; vocabulary, narrative, phonological awareness and print knowledge.

Likewise, our district has sought out proven instructional supports to improve academic progress in mathematics. At the elementary and middle school level students' rate of learning is measured through STAR Math and Study Island. Students have the opportunity for personalized learning through IXL and Study Island at every programmatic level. Both elementary schools will be implementing Excel Math in grades K-4 using a systematic spiraling approach to building higher order thinking skills and proficiency, which encourages self-correction and provides much needed repetition. At the middle and high school levels, students and teachers will continue to have access to Carnegie

Learning Mathematics instructional resources. As professional educators we recognize that students develop, learn, and master secondary mathematics at different paces, and educators often need to identify supplemental materials that complement their core instruction with the aim to keep students from falling behind. As such, Carnegie Learning Adaptive Math Software Solutions, Mathia and Cognitive Tutor continue to be made available. However, teachers have been given latitude to augment their instruction with other proven instructional resources. The 2016-17 school year also marks a shift in secondary mathematics back to the “new” traditional content standards and scope and sequence. Accordingly, Carnegie Learning instructional materials have transitioned to support Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II courses.

Across programmatic levels, concerted efforts will be made to provide professional learning sessions through Math Solutions. Each programmatic level will be afforded three full-day sessions with the hopes of adding embedded professional learning to include modelling and lesson development, as funds are available. In addition, Number Talks training will be provided to K-5 math teachers with a focus on building number sense skills.

### **Grade Level Academies and Teacher Looping Model**

During the 2016-2017 school year St. Marys High School will implement 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade level academies constructed within a teacher-looping model. The high school administration and leadership team will examine best practices specific to implementation. The practice of looping offers the potential for both academic and social benefits for students. Academically, the literature reports improved student achievement, increased time-on-task, increased instructional time for at-risk students to learn basic skills without the need for retention, and more opportunities for relationship building between teachers and students, and teachers and parents. The potential social benefits for students include diminished apprehension about a new school year, more time to establish positive peer relationships, increased support for students who require school as a social safety net, an enhanced sense of school and group as a "community", and increased opportunities for shy students to develop self-confidence. The essence of looping is the promotion of strong, extended, meaningful, positive interpersonal relationships between teachers and students that foster increased student motivation and, in turn, stimulate improved learning outcomes for students. Looping teachers allows for a greater knowledge of students' strengths and weaknesses, allowing for increased opportunities for teachers to tailor curriculum to individual needs. St. Marys High School administration and school leadership team, in collaboration with district leadership, must be vigilant in their implementation efforts.

### **Improving Student Attendance**

Pleasants County Schools maintains a belief that we must teach the whole child. Our schools are responsible for teaching the state curriculum but hold a responsibility to promote leadership, citizenship and characteristics necessary to be a productive adult. Overall, our yearly attendance rate is commensurate with schools across our state and the nation. However, as our students pass through programmatic levels, there is a significant increase in the percentage of students who are chronically absent at the secondary level, which clearly impedes student learning. Each school day, students are missing from their classrooms—many without a bona fide excuse. Consequently, it is critical to identify strategies that intervene effectively with youth who are chronically truant. As such, Pleasants County Schools continues to focus our efforts and resources on strengthening partnerships with law enforcement, probation, court system, social service agencies, as well as, parents and families to tackle this systemic problem.

## **Priority 2 – Improving District Operations & Accountability**

### **Distributive Leadership as a Driving Force**

Pleasants County Schools has adopted the core belief that “Leadership Matters”. In recent years there have been changes in district and school level leadership. Regardless of the changes in personnel our school system must never falter and transition must be seamless. Subsequently, our district has embraced a commitment to implore a distributive leadership model operationalized by high quality standards. Schools have identified a leadership team and established common practices for operation and a strategic focus. Through collaborative conversations with school leadership teams, district level leadership has improved communication, increased accountability and has provided a stronger understanding of the supports and resources needed for their growth. In the coming school year, efforts will be made to strengthen our leadership team model.

### **Educator Evaluation System for Teachers, Counselors and Principals**

The West Virginia Department of Education and the West Virginia Legislature have adopted an educator evaluation system with a vision of school leadership and effective teaching. This system includes all stakeholders and requires goal setting and data-driven outcomes. This system is expected to create a culture of increased support, accountability and transparency. The work of educating students is viewed as a shared responsibility between the educator and instructional leader. District and school-level leadership must maintain a continued emphasis on providing the necessary supports and resources for professional learning to ensure continuous growth.

### **Communication through Collaborative Conversations**

The district leadership team will facilitate three Collaborative Conversations with each school leadership team. The focus of conversation will include school data, strategic plan goals and action step progress and efforts to improve outcomes for students. More specifically, school leadership teams will be asked probing questions requiring them to communicate understanding of their performance data, efforts central to continuous improvement and the role of their leadership team to effect positive change.

### **Measuring Performance Data & Monitoring Leading and Lagging Indicators**

Principals and school leadership teams will conduct a comprehensive data analysis each nine weeks on targeted leading and lagging indicators. The Director of C&I will provide a tool that teams will use to report their data and conduct a self-reflection. With an emphasis on data-driven decision making, strategic plan goals and action steps must target identified deficiencies and root causes. School personnel have been trained on and encouraged to use the Clarity Warning System as a means to identify systemic weaknesses and at-risk students.

### **Monitoring Focus on Strategic Goals & Implementation of Identified Action Steps**

The district leadership team will work collaboratively with schools in updating their Strategic Plan and each school will be provided a follow-up feedback report prior to the "official" school submission. In addition, principals and school leadership teams will complete and submit a quarterly Strategic Plan Progress Report detailing the status of each action step and a narrative delineating implementation efforts. The Director of C&I will provide a tool that teams will use to report their progress and follow-up constructive feedback. The school level and district strategic plan is viewed as a fluid document with no beginning or end date.

### **MISSION STATEMENT:**

ALL students will leave Pleasants County Schools career and college ready to take their place and succeed in our global society.

### **CORE BELIEFS:**

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## **SECTION II & SECTION III**

### **GOALS – WHAT ARE THE DISTRICT’S IMPROVEMENT GOALS?**

### **ACTION PLAN – WHAT CORE ACTIONS OR PROCESSES WILL BE IMPLEMENTED TO ACCOMPLISH OUR GOALS?**

#### **Goal I: Improve student academic success in all courses of study through high-quality instruction and personalized learning as measured by school and state accountability data.**

- Provide targeted professional learning to strengthen capacity for differentiated instruction and personalized learning in math and reading.
- Monitor school-level benchmark assessment data and provide feedback through the district-wide curriculum team.
- Provide leadership and professional learning in developing high-quality lesson design that includes identified APL Instructional Strategies.
- Explore and research best practices associated with the implementation of a standards-based grading system at the elementary level.
- Revise and monitor the school-level data collection tool which focuses on both leading and lagging indicators. Utilization of the revised version will place a greater emphasis on data-driven decision making in the delivery of instruction. Also, the revised version will require principals and school leadership teams to engage in a higher level of reflective practice.
- Provide targeted professional learning on classroom management and APL Instructional Strategies to improve the quality of instruction across programmatic levels.
- Develop, support and monitor schools' implementation of an APL Instructional Strategies Pacing Guide.
- Develop a planning tool for teachers that guides their practice in designing effective lessons using the APL approach.
- Develop an APL walk-through template and monitor the level of implementation of the district APL Implementation Pacing Guide.

**Goal II: Provide engaging classroom environments through a focused, integrated curriculum challenging all students to reach their potential as measured by school outcome data.**

- Monitor the facilitation of four Instructional Practices Inventory (IPI) coding sessions / debriefings per school.
- As a result of the elementary school curriculum audit conducted in 2015-2016, the district administrative team will provide the necessary support efforts of both elementary schools to implement Excel Math and Number Talks in grades K-4.
- As a result of the school curriculum audits conducted in 2015-2016, the Director of C & I will work collaboratively with principals and math curricular teams to facilitate professional learning opportunities to strengthen the delivery of core instruction.

**Goal III: Build leadership capacity throughout the district to promote and sustain continuous improvement for all as measured by school and state accountability data and performance inventories.**

- In an effort to maintain district-level awareness and support of school-level initiatives, strategic goals and action steps, as well as performance data, the central office administration will schedule and conduct collaborative conversations with school leadership teams three times per year.
- In order to maintain a high degree of accountability, the Director of C & I will provide principals / leadership teams with a tool to monitor progress on strategic plan goals and actions steps through the submission of a quarterly Strategic Plan Progress Report. Subsequently, the Director of C & I will provide a feedback report and initiate necessary action to support the goals and action steps of school plans.
- In an effort to monitor the quality and frequency of professional learning provided to administrators, teachers and counselors, the district will purchase and implement a digital professional learning management system.

**Professional Development Needs - What Skills or Knowledge Are Needed to Accomplish Our Goals:**

**Beginning Teachers (Years 0-2)**

- Continue assigning mentor teachers for all first-year teachers and provide an orientation session for new hires.
- Provide school procedures and district and state policies on all technology support systems and instructional resources.
- Send all beginning teachers, year one and two, to WVCPD Beginning Teacher Academy.
- Provide additional, targeted, professional development based on individual need.

**Experienced Teachers (3+ Years)**

- Continue embedded professional development at the building level, in the county, and through RESA V.
- Continue to have teachers meet and work in Professional Learning Teams, grade-level collaborative teams, and departments.
- Provide targeted professional development in areas identified as needing improvement through the new evaluation process.

**Student Teachers**

- Continue to support and maintain a long-standing partnership with WVU-P and its teacher preparation program.
- Send principals and cooperating teachers to orientation meetings with perspective student teachers.
- Afford student teachers the opportunity to attend targeted professional learning opportunities.

**Other staff (administrators, counselors, paraprofessionals, academic coaches, etc.)**

- Provide quality, purposeful, succinct professional learning opportunities to support growth of personnel in accordance with the WV High Quality Standards and Functions.
- Provide professional learning opportunities to support growth in the Standards of Professional Practice for our Superintendent, Principals and Teacher Leaders.