



Office of School Improvement Newsletter

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Message from the Editors

Mr. Michael L. Hill, PASS Coordinator
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Welcome to the Spring Issue of the Office of School Improvement (OSI) Newsletter! We hope that you found the Winter issue beneficial as we all work together improving educational outcomes for children. The OSI is looking forward to continuing to publish the newsletter as we gear up for the 2011-2012 school year. Please join us in welcoming two new staff members to OSI — Ms. Janice Pierson who comes to us from Essex County Public Schools where she served as the Director of Instruction, and Dr. Lynn Sodat who served as Director of Elementary Instruction with the New Kent County Public Schools. Summer planning is underway in the OSI for training opportunities for many of our divisions and schools. Breaking Ranks training and training for new and returning schools with lead turnaround partners (LTP) will take place in July at the Richmond Omni; and The College of William and Mary will offer training opportunities for the two cohorts of divisions and liaisons identified for next year. Please look for more information on page 5. We are now entering a very critical time of the school year. Just as the Virginia Commonwealth University and University of Richmond basketball teams experienced success as a result of their preparation and implementation of their game plan at game time, so can all of our schools. Let's all work together to end our season as true championship teams. Let's do it for the kids!

Important Dates

April 26, 2011—Lead Turnaround Partner (LTP) and Strand IV Training

April 29, 2011—Third review of Indistar® plans

May 2, 2011—Pre-accreditation Eligibility (PACE) application window opens

June 10, 2011—PACE application window closes at 5:00 p.m.

June 11, 2011—Deadline for superintendents to submit the PACE Verification Report and a copy of the promotion/retention policy to the Office of School Improvement

June 30, 2011—Data Analysis Quarterly Report due (Strands I, III, IV, and V)

Note:

School Improvement Grant Timeline, See Page 5

Summer Training Dates, See Page 5

School Improvement Planning Update

The Office of School Improvement (OSI) continues to collaborate with the Center on Innovation and Improvement (CII) in an effort to assist school- and division-level teams with developing and aligning improvement plans reflecting research-based indicators. Currently, the OSI is working with CII to add indicators to the Indistar web-based planning tool to support implementation of formative assessment strategies. This will enable school teams to better assist classroom teachers with using assessments before, during, and after instruction. Several new features have been added to Indistar—*Summary Reports, Indicator Checklist Reports, and Implementation and Monitoring Reports*. Division and school teams may access these new features on their respective main menu pages at www.centerii.org in the "Resources and Reporting" drop-down menu. A special "thank you" to Stephanie Benedict (client services coordinator from CII) for all of her assistance with trouble-shooting and use of the Indistar tool!

Strand Updates

As a component of the 1003(a) and 1003(g) grants, divisions and schools participated in the *Virginia Model for School Improvement Summer Institute* and were assigned to strands.

Members of each strand participated in a variety of improvement activities such as monthly webinars, submission of data analysis quarterly reports, and meetings.

Strand I— Since our last newsletter, teams from each school have attended Teacher Leader Training sessions on motivation and meta-cognition; teacher-directed instruction; collegial coaching; instructional strategies; and personalizing instruction. Teams are sharing these strategies with their school faculties. Monthly school webinars have been aligned with Teacher Leader and Indistar® training. Since January, monthly division webinars have focused on Indistar® training, data

analysis, remediation, and feedback.

Strand II— Division contact persons and their assigned division liaisons have recently completed a series on bi-monthly technical assistance sessions focusing on building the capacity of central office teams to assist low-performing schools. As a culminating activity, participants will attend the School-University Research Network (SURN) Leadership Academy at the College of William and Mary from June 20-21, 2011.

Strand III— On March 18, 2011, principals and school improvement coaches representing 54 schools shared artifacts collected during their implementation of formative assessment modules. Using a protocol developed by Editure (formerly TeachFirst), each team shared their experiences and created plans for sustaining formative assessment strategies during the upcoming school

year.

Strand IV— School teams and their lead turnaround partners (LTP) have completed and begun implementing school improvement plans based on the CII Transformation Toolkit or the 25 Virginia Department of Education Request for Proposal (RFP) requirements. Dr. Julie Corbett, of Corbett Consulting, provided five technical assistance workshops for school teams throughout the school year.

Strand V— School improvement teams have completed their improvement plans using the Indistar® web-based planning tool. Principals of these schools will be invited to participate in Breaking Ranks training from July 18-20, 2011. The presentation will emphasize collaborative leadership and personalization of the school environment.

Graduation and Completion Index

In February 2009, the Virginia Board of Education revised the commonwealth's accreditation standards to create a "graduation and completion index" that requires high schools to meet a minimum benchmark to be *Fully Accredited*. The index awards:

- **100 points** for students who graduate with a diploma;
- **75 points** for students who earn a GED;
- **70 points** for students who were in school for four or more years, did not earn a credential, and remain enrolled at the end of the year; and
- **25 points** for students who finish high school with a certificate of program completion.

The weighted index points are totaled and then divided by the total number of students who earned a credential or stayed in school, plus all students in the adjusted cohort who dropped out or left school without earning a credential.

In an effort to assist high schools with examining issues that impact graduation rates, the VDOE collaborated with four Virginia school divisions, the [Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center](#), and the [National High School Center](#), in developing the Virginia Early Warning System (VEWS) tool to identify ninth-grade students who are at-risk of not graduating from high school. See page 5 for summer training available for schools on how to use the VEWS data. Additional information regarding the VEWS tool may be accessed at:

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/support/school_improvement/early_warning_system/index.shtml .





Kudos of the Quarter from the OSI Contractors

Amherst County: Central Elementary and Madison Heights Elementary School Improvement Teams are to be commended for targeting needs of individual students as a primary focus of K-5 weekly grade-level meetings.

Charles City: The division team is to be commended for the diligence with which it has revamped its Indistar Plan--informed by student performance data, its self-assessment, and its support of Charles City Elementary in self-assessing the school's plan.

Charlottesville City: The division staff are commended for their "all hands on deck" approach to providing on-site assistance to Clark Elementary School. Division staff, including the superintendent, visit the school weekly supporting individual teachers and school teams with student achievement needs.

Colonial Beach: Workshops and in-services have been offered throughout the year to promote the use of effective teaching strategies to increase student engagement and achievement. Dr. Jan Rozzelle and Dr. Valerie Gregory have provided follow-up to these sessions with classroom observations and one-on-one meetings with teachers.

Culpeper County: The 'Walk-through' program established by the division for all schools enables the division personnel and school administration to visit classrooms weekly. A database of these walk-throughs has been developed and is being used by the division and schools as a foundation for instructional and professional development conversations.

Franklin City: Beverly Rabil has presented Franklin City's triage process and High School Graduation Plan at two national conferences.

Greene County: The school division's success comes from working together as one. Directed by Jennifer Richter and Andrea Whitmarsh, the principals and coaches use a focus on collaboration to change the culture in their schools and enhance student performance.

Greensville County: The division is to be commended for its diligence in supporting Greensville Elementary School in self-assessing its Indistar Plan—providing sufficient time, energy, resources, and dialogue for the assessment to be meaningful both to the school and the division. The division is also to be commended for revamping its Indistar plan--informed by student performance data, its self assessment, and the support given to GES in self assessing its plan.

Louisa County: The collaboration between the division and Trevilians Elementary has resulted in an outstanding 45-day plan with data-driven monitoring checks as it is being implemented.

Lancaster County: The division team is to be commended for working in collaboration with the school team to implement modifications to instruction. Changes have included new technology and the addition of para-professionals in classrooms to assist teachers.

Madison County: The implementation of an effective peer observation program at Madison Primary School (K-2) and Waverly Yowell Elementary School (3-6) that was developed by the joint school improvement team and division personnel.

Middlesex County: James Lane and his team members work tirelessly to implement programs and innovative strategies that affect student achievement. They are already planning ways to sustain the momentum they are creating and looking forward to when no schools are in improvement!

Newport News City: Izzie Brown and the Palmer Elementary School Leadership Team will present a workshop in July at the National Staff Development Conference in Indianapolis on *Empowering and Developing Teacher Leaders*. The school also received a Parent Involvement Award to support their *Family Math Night*.

Portsmouth City: The division team is commended for developing a process to complete team observations of classes and provide feedback to school staff members. This has been most helpful in assisting school administration and leadership teams to improve the instructional process.

Richmond City: Richmond Alternative School has established a mentor program with Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) students who will serve as academic mentors and role models.

Roanoke City: The principal of Lincoln Terrace Elementary reported that 23 teachers are participating in *Take One*, a step towards gaining National Board Certification. The quarterly report data from Addison Middle School shows evidence that effective instructional practices used from the teacher leader and formative assessment training have reduced discipline, increased instructional time and improved student achievement. The principal and instructional coach of Westside Elementary chair weekly K-5 grade-level meetings using a student data room focusing on individual student intervention instructional strategies.

Stafford County: The division has coordinated monthly meetings involving the principals and administrative coaches from Falmouth, Kate Waller Barrett and Widewater. The shared experiences and support from the principals who have been in improvement have greatly assisted those new to the school improvement process.

Suffolk City: The principal of Elephant's Fork Elementary, Veleka Gatling, conducted a teacher *Lock-In* one afternoon – teachers and administrative staff came together to find creative solutions for remediating students prior to testing. She also instituted "No Worksheet Fridays." During the 45-day period, teachers were asked to use manipulatives, technology, presentations, etc. to teach/remediate/intervene – no worksheets allowed.

Williamsburg-James City County: The division team is commended for developing a process to complete team observations of classes and provide feedback to school staff. This has been most helpful in assisting school administration and leadership teams to improve the instructional process.

Division Spotlight: Franklin City Schools

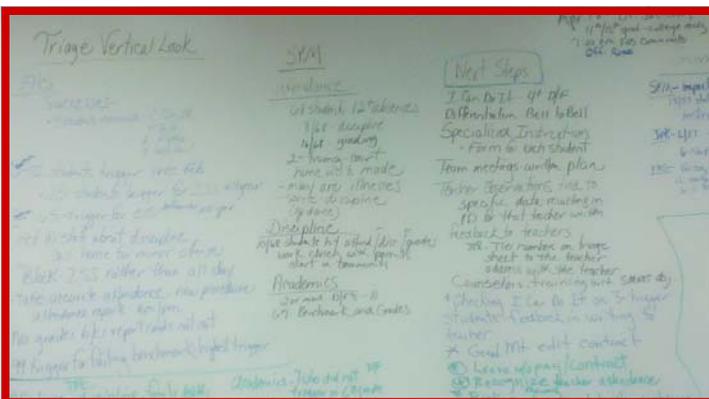


Is your division team grappling with ideas for establishing a coherent system to assist your struggling schools with improving student achievement? If you answered “yes,” then look no further than Franklin City Schools for a great solution!

The Franklin City Schools is a rural division located in Region 2 of Virginia. As a result of the division’s summer retreat, the division team organized an ongoing process, facilitated by the associate director of instruction, for meeting with principals and assistant principals to review various types of data such as student and teacher attendance, discipline infractions, grades, teacher observations, and benchmark scores. Members of the team include the superintendent of schools (Dr. Michelle Belle), assistant superintendent (Dr. Walter R. Clemons), associate director of instruction (Beverly Rabil), director of special education (Dianne Rusnak), and OSI division liaison (Annie Harman). A critical component of each meeting is the Franklin City Schools Triage Form that “red flags” students who are at-risk of failure based on attendance, discipline, and academics.

Each meeting agenda includes discussions about the division’s “non-negotiables” such as the Franklin City Schools Triage Form, E-walks, fully implemented K-8 reading block, and use of Indistar for school and division improvement planning. Building-level administrators bring data regarding the aforementioned topics to the monthly meetings to discuss successes, concerns, and short-/long-term plans for improvement. “Work Time” is built into the meetings which allows participants to discuss essential questions related to the data. During this time, principals and assistant principals take a global look at vertical data as a means of determining root causes of problems. Afterwards, each school team presents its findings to the entire group while a recorder records salient points and next steps on a white board. Everyone leaves each meeting with a clear course of subsequent actions. Ms. Rabil sends detailed minutes to all participants following each meeting .

On April 7, 2011, Dr. Yvonne Holloman (division-level support coordinator, Virginia Department of Education) and Dr. Lucia Sebastian (project director, The College of William and Mary) attended the division leadership team’s meeting with the building administrators and were quite impressed with the level of collegiality, attention to problem solving, and knowledge of individual student’s needs.



School Improvement Grant Timeline

GRANT AWARD	DATES	ACTIONS
FY 2010 1003(g) School Improvement Grant (SIG) Application	April 15, 2011	Application released to Title I Coordinators and Superintendents
	April 19, 2011	Webinar for Technical Assistance for Application (at 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.)
	May 2, 2011	Tier I and II Schools Meeting Lead Turnaround Partner Presentations VDOE, Floor 22, 8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
	June 6, 2011	Tier I and II Application and Contract Technical Assistance VDOE, Floor 22, 8:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
	June 17, 2011	Application due
FY2010 1003(a) School Improvement Application	May 18, 2011	Application released to Title I Coordinators and Superintendents
	May 23, 2011	Webinar for Technical Assistance for Application (at 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.)
	June 17, 2011	Application due
FY 2009 1003(g) Continuation questionnaire	May 18, 2011	Application released to Title I Coordinators and Superintendents
	May 24, 2011	Webinar for Technical Assistance for Application (at 10:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.)
	June 17, 2011	Application due

SUMMER TRAINING CALENDAR

June 20-21, 2011—School and University Research Network (SURN) Workshop (Strand II) - register through the College of William & Mary

July 18-20, 2011—Breaking Ranks Training (Strand V, plus schools/principals who have not attended BRIM training in the past two years, Richmond—Omni Hotel)***

July 18-21, 2011— New Lead Turnaround Partner Training (LTP) with Julie Corbett, iStation and Indistar Training (Strand IV—Cohort 2, Richmond—Omni Hotel)***

July 21, 2011— Training through Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center (ARCC) for Virginia Early Warning System (VEWS) Graduation Rate for High Schools (Wytheville—TBA)***

July 22, 2011—iStation and Indistar Training for Returning LTP Schools (Strand IV—Cohort 1, Richmond—Omni Hotel)***

July 25, 2011— Training through ARCC for VEWS Graduation Rate or High Schools (Richmond—Omni Hotel)***

July 29, 2011— Training through ARCC for VEWS Graduation Rate for High Schools (Newport News—TBA)***

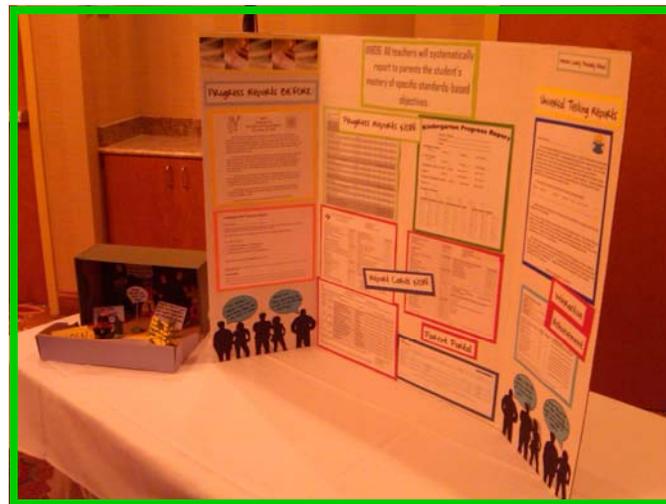
July 27-29, 2011—Teacher Evaluation Pilot for Certain Schools at the College of William and Mary

***Registration through Virginia Tech. The Office of School Improvement (OSI) will send an e-mail when registration opens. Contact Selena McBride for information. Selena.McBride@doe.virginia.gov

Formative Assessment Training with Editure and Strand III Schools
March 18, 2011



Session IV of Teacher Leader Training with Strand I Schools
March 30-31, 2011



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The Office of School Improvement promotes student learning and achievement by assisting schools and school divisions in the implementation of effective instructional strategies and best practices. The responsibilities of the Office of School Improvement include school-level and division-level academic reviews, school improvement planning and innovative programs such as the Partnership for Achieving Successful Schools (PASS).



The ultimate goal in school improvement is for the people attached to the school to drive its continuous improvement for the sake of their own children and students.

- Dr. Sam Redding, 2009

