



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 Winter 2012 issue of the Office of School Improvement Newsletter. We are really excited about the opportunity to continue publishing what has become a very popular and effective communication tool for the Office of School Improvement (OSI). This issue will be the first of two planned for publication this school year. We hope that you enjoy reading it and find the information helpful as we all work together for the benefit of the children we serve. First of all, please help us welcome Jo Ann Burkholder, Student Assistance Systems Coordinator, as a new member to the OSI team for this school year. Jo Ann is focusing her attention on student support services at the division and school level and is also assisting Dr. Sodot with the high school initiative. To be sure, Breaking Ranks K-12, Lead Turnaround Partner, and regional graduation and completion index informational and training meetings held during the summer of 2011 provided a tremendous springboard to a successful beginning of this school year. The OSI with the assistance and support of the 76 divisions and well over 200 schools, has many accomplishments since September. Notably, the successful launching of a differentiated technical assistance model developed by the OSI that all divisions and schools have access; support for high schools with graduation completion index concerns; development and implementation of the "Virginia Dashboard"; significant updates to the Indistar™ Web-based planning tool, and continuation of the focus on capacity building at the division level. Also, new for this year is the availability of an OSI Technical Assistance Guide. We have added a new section to this issue called "Principals' Corner". This section will include tips and strategies to assist them in their school improvement efforts. The OSI acknowledges the importance of teaming in effective organizations. We want to thank our dynamic team—the division and school level teams, OSI contractors, the College of William and Mary, the Center on Innovation and Improvement (CII), the Appalachia Regional Comprehensive Center (ARCC), and the Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership (VFEL), for all of their support. We know that great things can happen for our children when we all work and learn together and are supportive of each other. Please do not hesitate to contact the OSI for any questions that you might have!

Important Dates

Jan. 11—Cohort 2: LTP Meeting at Holiday Inn Airport
Jan. 12—Cohort 1: LTP Meeting at Holiday Inn Airport
Jan. 17-18— High School 8 Elements Webinars
Jan. 24— High School Regional Liaisons Webinar
Jan. 30— ARCC Training for High School Multi-dimensional Change Map
Feb.— Schools to Complete Data Analysis Quarterly Report Form on Indistar™ Dashboard
Feb. 7—Student Assistance Programming Webinar
Feb. 10—Student Growth Model Meeting-Selected Divisions— Richmond VDOE 22nd Floor
Feb. 13— Division Contacts and Division Liaisons Meeting in Williamsburg
Feb. 13—Differentiated Technical Assistance Team Contractors Meeting (Webinar)
Feb. 14-15— High School 8 Elements Webinars
March 5— Division Liaisons Meeting
March 6—Student Assistance Programming Webinar
March 8— Translating School Climate Data into Academic Success™ Webinar
March 20-21— High School 8 Elements Webinars
March 13— Cohort 2: LTP Mtg at Holiday Inn Airport
March 14— Cohort 1: LTP Mtg at Holiday Inn Airport
April— Schools to Complete Data Analysis Quarterly Report Form on Indistar™ Dashboard
April 9—Differentiated Technical Assistance Team Contractors Meeting (Webinar)
April 10—Student Assistance Programming Webinar
April 25— Cohort 2: LTP Meeting at Holiday Inn Airport
April 26— Cohort 1: LTP Meeting at Holiday Inn Airport
June—Schools to Complete Data Analysis Quarterly Report Form on Indistar™ Dashboard
Note: Please see the DTAT Guide posted on the VDOE Web-site for additional dates.

School Improvement Planning Update

School- and division-level teams will notice that several upgrades have been made to the Indistar™ Web-based planning tool. As a means of emphasizing the importance of using on-going assessments to make instructional decisions, indicators aligned with the following most pertinent components of formative assessment have been added:

- Formative and summative assessments
- Checking for understanding
- Feedback

Moreover, recipients of school improvement grants (SIG) will use Indistar™ to document compliance with the federal grant requirements such as progress in meeting the leading and lagging indicators as well as transformation implementation. A variety of reports are now available to assist teams with monitoring and capturing the essence of their improvement efforts. Examples include: the Comprehensive Plan Report, Where Are We Now? Graphs, and the Summary Report. Additional information regarding the Indistar™ Web-based planning tool is available at www.indistar.org.

Office of School Improvement (OSI) Updates

Division Leadership Support Team Initiative— In an effort to build local capacity for improvement, the OSI has continued to collaborate with The College of William and Mary to implement the division leadership support team (DLST) initiative. The purpose of the initiative is to provide technical assistance to central office personnel associated with recipients of 1003(a) or FY 2009 1003(g) grant funds. Each participating division is assigned a Virginia Department of Education contractor (division liaison) who conducts a needs sensing interview with the central office team to determine the level of support needed during the year and facilitates the monthly meetings.

The OSI has planned intensive technical assistance for the division liaisons as well as their respective division contact persons. Dr. Valerie Gregory will lead an engaging book study related to John Hattie's book, *Visible Learning*, with both groups throughout the year. In addition, representatives from the eight regional Teaching and Technical Assistance Centers (TTAC) will participate in meetings with the division liaisons and division contact persons to share insights regarding the Embedded Technical Assistance Pilot Project being implemented in several schools receiving 1003(a) or FY 2009 1003(g) grant funds.

High Schools and VEWS (Virginia Early Warning System) — We are excited to provide support to high schools this year. Our regional liaisons are assisting our high schools as they complete self-assessments and implement the VEWS or DataCation Early Warning Systems. Virginia's implementation of the Virginia Early Warning System (VEWS) was even highlighted in 2 nationally-presented webinars! High schools have also been active participants in the Eight Elements of High School Improvement webinar series, which has been developed and presented by the Virginia Foundation for Educational Leadership.

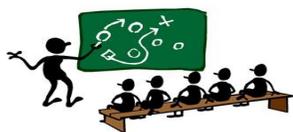
All of our warned and provisionally accredited high schools have successfully completed their Pre-HS data upload into VEWS and participated with their school teams in the first VFEL Eight Elements of HS Improvement webinar. We are proud to have 100% participation and cooperation as we embark upon this high school improvement journey!

DataCation/"Virginia Dashboard" — The DataCation/"Virginia Dashboard" Web-based data analysis tool has been purchased by 250 schools in 46 divisions throughout the state. Training sessions were offered both in-person and via webinar in November, and a number of schools and divisions have quickly become proficient in their use of DataCation. Feedback from the field regarding this powerful and valuable tool has been very positive.

Student Assistance Programming — This year we've added a more intensive focus on developing student and family supports and engaging community stakeholders through Student Assistance Programming (SAP). It offers school divisions and schools with a flexible and adaptable process to easily integrate existing processes. SAP intertwines tiered strategies that connect systems of support to prevent or intervene with family, social, and emotional challenges that create barriers to teaching and learning. Many times these barriers manifest as behaviors such as truancy, tardies, bullying, dropping out of school, and a host of other issues that impact the classroom and school environment. SAP works to enhance the positive conditions for learning through using school climate survey data and other information sources at the division and school-level and the early warning system data and other information at the individual student and parent level. A key construct of SAP is sustaining reciprocal partnerships with community stakeholders to support stu-

and their parents as well as advancing college and career readiness opportunities. Several webinars associated with Student Assistance Programming are listed in the important dates section on page 1. A couple of future webinars will focus on "Transformative Classroom Management" and "Using the Discipline, Crime and Violence Data for School Improvement Planning." The webinar dates and times will be posted on the OSI Website.

Differentiated Technical Assistance (DTA) Model—The OSI implemented a differentiated technical assistance model during the fall of this school year. The model provides divisions and schools an opportunity to have available technical assistance that is focused on addressing differentiated/individualized needs. Assistance is provided by a team of highly qualified OSI contractors through webinar topics, direct technical assistance, peer mentoring, and through a VDOE intra-agency technical assistance team. Additionally, the OSI has teamed with the Office of Special Education and Instructional Services to offer a series of webinars on Co-teaching and Inclusive Practices. Divisions and schools access the menu of technical assistance offerings through recommendations from division liaisons (VDOE contractors); regional liaisons (VDOE contractors); or from the 1003(a) grant funds application for divisions new to school improvement. The OSI receives the DTA requests and assigns technical assistance that matches needs to the requests. The response thus far to this new approach has been very encouraging. We want to thank the VDOE contractors, divisions, and schools for embracing this new approach and assisting the OSI with a smooth implementation. For more information on the DTA model, divisions and schools are encouraged to talk with their respective VDOE division/regional liaison. Those divisions who do not have a VDOE contractor assigned, please call the OSI for further information or assistance.



Principals' Corner

Below is a list by month of important actions/activities associated with effective principal practices:

January:

__ Review report cards and provide written feedback to teachers.
__ Meet with individual teachers regarding students who may require a referral to the Student Intervention Team (SIT) and conduct SAT meetings based on teacher referrals.

__ Observe classroom instruction and conduct follow-up conferences with teachers. (schedule peer observations and assign professional development (PD) as necessary)

__ Following division procedures, develop and monitor performance improvement plans for teachers whose performance fails to meet expectations.

__ Identify staff members whom you will not recommend for contract renewal. Collaborate with your immediate supervisor and the human resources department to prepare the appropriate documentation adhering to reporting timelines as directed.

__ Initiate school developed retention procedures and guidelines timeline. (begin meetings with teachers regarding their tentative retention lists; supports needed for individual student success, and procedures for notifying parents of the possibility of retention)

__ Conduct mid-year meeting with students to reinforce school-wide academic expectations and to review the school's discipline policy with an emphasis on the most commonly cited infractions at the school. All staff should attend.

__ Conduct monthly meeting with the school leadership and improvement team. (review progress of SIP on Indistar™; make needed revisions; post progress monitoring notes, agendas, and minutes; review current school data)

__ Conduct monthly staff meeting with a focus on instructional practices and review/update of Indistar™ SIP.

__ Plan a quarterly school celebration for students, staff, and parents.

__ Conduct monthly administrative meeting with grade-level/content area teams to discuss individual student progress (all students); discuss referrals to SIT where necessary. All support staff attend to include guidance.

__ Schedule instructional walkthroughs with the school leadership team to include division personnel noting instructional areas of strength and those needing improvement.

__ Distribute school monthly newsletter and calendar of activities for February to all staff members, students, and parents.

February

__ Complete quarterly report form on Indistar™ dashboard.

__ Meet with staff members regarding the upcoming SOL Writing Test. (conduct meeting with grade teachers and proctors regarding testing procedures; distribute parent letters and testing schedule; develop incentive plan for students; schedule individual student conferences to provide support and build confidence)

__ Observe classroom instruction and conduct follow-up conferences with teachers. (schedule peer observations and assign PD as necessary)

__ Schedule instructional walkthroughs with the school leadership team and division personnel noting instructional areas of strength and those needing improvement.

__ Conduct monthly meeting with the school leadership and improvement team. (review progress of SIP on Indistar™; make needed revisions; post progress monitoring notes, agendas and minutes; review quarterly report data and submitted form on Indistar dashboard)

__ Begin developing a six-week instructional plan to begin prior to Spring testing with a focus on individual student needs.

__ Conduct monthly administrative meeting with grade-level/content area teams to discuss individual student progress (all students); discuss referrals to SAT; all support staff attend to include guidance.

__ Conduct monthly staff meeting with a focus on instructional practices and review/update of Indistar™ SIP.

__ Distribute school monthly newsletter and calendar of activities for March to all staff members, students, and parents.

__ Conduct a quarterly school celebration for students, staff, and parents.

March

__ Observe classroom instruction and conduct follow-up conferences with teachers. (schedule peer observations and assign PD as necessary)

__ Schedule instructional walkthroughs with the school leadership team and division personnel noting instructional areas of strength and those needing improvement.

__ Conduct monthly meeting with the school leadership and improvement team. (review progress of SIP on Indistar™; make needed revisions; post progress monitoring notes, meeting agendas, and minutes; review current school data)

__ Finalize a six-week instructional plan targeting specific individual student needs in preparation for Spring testing. (to be implemented and monitored during the six weeks prior to testing)

__ Conduct monthly administrative meeting with grade-level teams to discuss individual student progress (all students); discuss referrals to SAT where necessary; all support staff attend to include guidance.

__ Conduct monthly staff meeting with a focus on instructional practices and review/update of Indistar™ SIP.

__ Plan transition program for rising sixth/ninth grade students that includes staff from elementary, middle, and high school.

__ Plan a quarterly school celebration for students, staff, and parents.

__ Distribute school monthly newsletter and calendar of activities for April to all staff members, students, and parents.



Kudos of the Quarter from the OSI Contractors

Augusta County Public Schools — The division and school leadership teams are working hard to replicate the success that Beverley Manor Elementary School experienced last year with its Indistar™ Plan. The willingness to share ideas among the division's schools and build on the successful experience of one's colleagues should foster achievement gains for the division's schools in program improvement.

Culpeper County Public Schools — Culpeper County has developed and implemented a division-wide system for collecting data from walk-through observations using iPad technology.

Grayson County Public Schools — Grayson County has made excellent strides during the first quarter to lower its percentage of students in Tier Three based on the most recent assessment. The county also gained positive strokes for its overall work with iStation during a recent meeting from the Director of the Office of School Improvement.

Greene County Public Schools — Greene County has purchased Observation 360 to complement PD 360 as a means of providing targeted and differentiated professional learning to teachers. With the goal of ensuring more student-centered instruction, Division Leadership Team members spend a minimum of 2-3 hours per week conducting walk-through observations in schools.

Lancaster County Public Schools - Good work in continuing a strong division team with 50% of the team being comprised of new members.

Lynchburg City Public Schools — Lynchburg City has allocated resources to support effective instruction in Title I Improvement Schools. All teachers at Heritage Elementary School and Perrymont Elementary School have either completed or are scheduled to take the Skillful Teacher course this year.

Portsmouth City Public Schools — Great job in assisting the schools in expanding Indistar™ plans to include issues requiring a very specific focus and developing effective monitoring methods.

Prince William County Public Schools — Principals from the 23 Title I elementary schools participated in a professional development experience during which they learned to gather evidence of effective balanced literacy instruction using the "instructional rounds" protocol.

Richmond County Public Schools — Richmond County received a district accreditation from the Advanc-Ed / SACS Commission. Its efforts in school improvement reform were commended.

Spotsylvania County Public Schools — Spotsylvania's division team is to be commended for the great collaborative effort in working with Livingston Elementary. The school's instructional program has greatly improved and the school met AYP requirements this year which was due in part to the persistent support, guidance and direction provided by the division team.

Virginia Beach Public Schools — Reading specialists are collaborating with University of Virginia staff to bring a Struggling Readers Academy to Virginia Beach. Reading teachers and Title I teachers will be coached in implementing strategies to diagnose and remediate students' reading challenges. Virginia Beach teachers are also using the *Making Meaning* and *Being a Writer* programs to enhance literacy instruction for all students.

Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools — Great work in efficiently and effectively developing additional methods of assisting school personnel with professional development and strengthening monitoring efforts.

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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