

BOARD BRIEF

Date: March 8, 2019

For ACTION: _____

For INFORMATION: X

Board Agenda: Yes _____

No X

FROM: Clinton Page, Ed.S., Chief Accountability Officer
Natalie Mitchell, Director of Title I Programs

THROUGH: Gregory C. Hutchings, Jr., Ed.D., Superintendent of Schools
Terri H. Mozingo, Ed.D., Chief Academic Officer

TO: The Honorable Cindy Anderson, Chair, and
Members of the Alexandria City School Board

TOPIC: School Improvement Planning

SUMMARY:

The intent of this brief is to update the School Board on the vision and process of the current school improvement planning process across all school locations within the division.

BACKGROUND:

Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) relaunched an explicit annual school planning for improvement process across all division schools several years ago. Based on feedback from schools and adjustments in forthcoming Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) requirements, this process was adjusted in the 2018-2019 school year. The impetus for this change, while multifaceted, can be summed simply into three key areas;

- Alignment – with state and federal requirements, to eliminate redundancies, and to ensure all schools are utilizing the same language, process, and tools in their improvement planning work.
- Prioritization – to strategically highlight the areas and the actions that, when implemented, will most effectively advance the work of schools in their continuous improvement efforts and in sustaining lasting change.
- Measurement – to refine processes where schools and departments are supporting one another via a more iterative process through reviewing the strategies being implemented and their impact on the overall goal area via pre-identified formative measures.

The division, beginning in spring 2018, began the process of alignment by using VDOE's new improvement planning template as the foundation for the revised process within ACPS. This template was modified in coordination with VDOE to meet the unique needs of ACPS while ensuring that any revisions would still allow the document to meet state and federal

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requirements as well. School teams came together in July and August to review data from the previous school year. Based on this review, emergent findings led school teams to identify overall goals in the areas of English, mathematics, an additional content of their choosing, and in an area pertaining to school environment (leadership and governance, professional development, safe environment, or family and community engagement). Along with overall goals, school teams then drilled much deeper into the essential research based strategies that would drive improvement in each goal area. For each strategy, teams finally identified time-bound discrete action-steps linked to the ACPS 2020 strategic plan with formative measures identified to gauge the success of these steps throughout the year.

To support schools in this work, professional learning opportunities were delivered over the summer and early fall. School plans were then initially submitted as drafts for review and feedback from key Central Office staff to further support school teams. Most significantly, a culture of shared accountability and support has been reinforced across all schools through quarterly data chats between school teams and Central Office leaders. The chats have focused on schools' strategies selected and implementation, measurement of discrete action steps and schools' formative ways of measuring if they are yielding the desired outcomes, and all chats conclude with a discussion of what supports schools require from Central Office in advancing improvements. Fall and winter chats have already occurred across all schools with the next round of discussions happening from late March into April.

As the division moves into year two of the school improvement planning process, refinements will be made based upon feedback received from school and central office staff throughout the 2018-2019 school year. In addition, schools will engage in a common division supported process of in-depth analyses and root causes leading to improved and strategic theories of change.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Superintendent recommends the School Board review this brief for a further understanding of the school improvement process employed during the 2018-2019 school year.

IMPACT:

The revisions to the school improvement planning process were made to meet the three core values of alignment, prioritization, and measurement. Through a systematized process, schools and Central Office are able to strategically align the work across the organization to best foster, expedite, and sustain improvements in targeted areas. Further, through quarterly chats a culture of shared accountability, support, and two-way communication between all schools and Central Office leaders are reinforced as organizational values and commitments.

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