

1.) Comprehensive Needs Assessment

Members of the South Canyon Professional Learning Community Leadership Team are: Brad Jungwirth-Principal, Chris Frederick-parent, Karrie Eilbeck-Parent, Laura Van Dale-2nd Grade, Bobbi Adrian-IMS, Michael Staedtler-5th Grade, Tara Boechler. This team is responsible for leading the staff through a process of reviewing data, setting measurable goals focused on student results and family input, selecting instructional strategies targeted at specific learning targets of low student performance, and continuously assessing and refining better ways of teaching the targeted skills by examining student work. The district provides the time for this to occur during early release Wednesdays from 1:30-3:45.

This Leadership Team has created a comprehensive plan for engaging teachers in the process of creating instructional roadmaps and implementing the PLC data cycle, beginning with the creation of shared performance student learning objectives (SLO).

A variety of needs assessments are done on an ongoing basis. Needs assessments that are given several times a year include: text reading level, observation surveys (letter ID, concepts about print, hearing and recording sounds, word features), on-demand writing, and math screeners. Fifth grade students will also take the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI). All 3-5 students will again take the Smarter Balanced Assessment this spring. Documentation is kept on file at the building level.

This spring, we will survey all South Canyon families, and conduct a family-friendly walk-through.

Challenges include the achievement gap in literacy and mathematics that exists for students in Special Education and Native American and Economically Disadvantaged subgroups. Through common formative assessments, we will identify specific strands in both reading and math where students struggle.

2.) Implementation of School wide Reform Strategies

A Professional Learning Community (PLC) is an overarching framework to guide and focus all district and school improvement processes. The main concepts of a PLC are in direct alignment with the goals the Board of Education approved in June, 2012 which are: (1) a guaranteed, viable, relevant curriculum, (2) a comprehensive system of assessment, and (3) diverse opportunities for learning success in alignment with the district's technology literacy, balanced literacy, and inquiry mathematics practices.

In year five of district-wide PLC implementation, the focus will be to: continue to clarify our essential learning outcomes and to develop common diagnostic and summative assessments and measures of proficiency at the district level by engaging teams of teachers representing every grade level and school. This will allow grade level teams of teachers to engage in data cycles to improve student learning.

Developing a school's ability to function as a PLC is a journey that requires fundamental changes in school culture—changes that occur incrementally.

Priorities in 2015-2016:

1. To deepen district-wide shared understanding of PLC principles, practices, concepts, and common vocabulary with an emphasis on the four critical questions and how they interconnect and support each other.
2. To continue to develop high-performing collaborative teams in order to achieve the collective purpose of high levels of learning for all students.
3. To clarify what students must know and be able to do as a result of each course, grade level, and unit of Instruction.
4. To develop and deploy frequent team-developed common formative and summative assessments so that teams can engage in data cycles.

The PLC process provides a guiding framework where student learning data are used by collaborative teacher teams to focus their work and implement best practices that ensure that every student learns. DuFour and DuFour (2011) define a PLC as “an on-going process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve.”

The PLC process rests on three big ideas, and each of those ideas has significant implications for educators. Importantly, PLC practices are interconnected, and they only have power as a whole.

Big Idea #1: A Focus on Learning

The first big idea is that the fundamental purpose of schools is to ensure that all students learn at high levels. In order to bring this idea to life, educators work together to clarify the following four critical questions in order to ensure that all students learn at high levels:

- 1.) *What do we want students to learn?*
- 2.) *How will we know if our students are learning?*
- 3.) *How will we respond when students do not learn?*
- 4.) *How will we enrich and extend the learning for students who are proficient?*

Big Idea #2: A Focus on Collaborative Teamwork

Helping all students learn will require us to work in a collective effort to meet the needs of each student. In order to bring this idea to life:

Educators are organized into meaningful collaborative teams in which members work interdependently to achieve common goals for which they are mutually accountable. Educators are clear on the purpose and priorities of their collaboration.

Big Idea #3: A Focus on Results

Educators must create a results orientation in order to know if students are learning. They must have and use evidence of student learning to drive continuous improvement of the PLC process. In order to bring this idea to life:

Educators work collaboratively to achieve SMART goals. Educators collaboratively gather and analyze evidence of student learning on a regular basis to

(1) inform and improve individual professional practice as well as the collective practice of the collaborative team

(2) use assessment results to respond to students by name and by need.

We are also using Dreambox as a form of math intervention; this adaptive technology allows students to work at their current instructional level.

3.) Highly qualified teachers in all core content area classes

Instruction at South Canyon Elementary School is provided by a highly qualified staff of 39 certified teachers and approximately 11 full or part time classified support staff members, all serving in a variety of capacities, including literacy, mathematics, special education, and special areas. The school district actively strives to attract highly qualified staff through a variety of recruiting and job notification options. All teachers at South Canyon Elementary are of Highly Qualified Status in their content areas.

The district has hired a person in the Human Resource Office to review all teacher and paraprofessional files to determine who is highly qualified. Every paraprofessional or certified teacher who applies to the district must meet the highly qualified status in order to be considered and interviewed for a position.

A testing area has been established in the Human Resource Office for candidates who choose to take the Praxis, a competency assessment for teachers and paraprofessionals. The district provides support assisting paraprofessionals in meeting the highly qualified status through testing, tutoring, and assistance with tuition. Paraprofessionals are also included in building level staff development opportunities. Paraprofessionals currently employed have taken the Praxis or have the required number of college credits. 100 % of South Canyon's Title I paraprofessionals providing instructional service are highly qualified. The report from Human Resources indicates that all of South Canyon's certified staff meets highly qualified requirements.

4.) Professional Development

Opportunities for collaboration, continuing education, and professional development are provided through participation in on-site and district professional development options, as well as in local conferences and workshops.

South Canyon Elementary spends a significant amount of our designated budget on professional development. South Canyon Elementary provides has 3.0 FTE in instructional support staff.

Over the past several years, numerous staff have attended conferences such as NCTM and Reading Recovery Institutes, and Daily 5 and CAFÉ workshops. Staff participate in a range of on-site professional development, in the form of technology, math, and literacy classes, book studies, and coaching cycles. Additionally, in a high-functioning PLC, job-embedded professional development is the norm as staff members continuously share best practices with each other.

The South Canyon Elementary staff members meet on an ongoing basis to monitor the progress of students. Grade level teachers meet regularly to discuss progress with students and develop strategies to support them. Currently, our emphasis at the building level is how to best utilize our time and human resources to meet the needs of all students.

This year, we are planning a literacy and math night, with the goal to provide better support to families in helping their students achieve at high levels. The purpose is to have training available to parents in math and literacy instruction when they play inquiry math and literacy games with their students. Additionally, we have a community Run/Walk to earn money to supplement our literacy and math programs.

Rapid City Area Schools has a New Teacher Induction Program. The mission of this program is to engage, prepare, support, and sustain the continuous development of educators whose knowledge and skills advance student learning. This program has several goals, including supporting the development of the knowledge and skills needed by teachers to be successful, attracting and retaining highly qualified teachers, and improving student performance through training and assistance for new teachers.

5.) Strategies to Attract High-Quality and Highly Qualified Teachers to the District:

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6.) Parent Involvement and Education

Increased parent involvement is an ongoing goal at South Canyon Elementary School. A Parent Involvement Policy and a Parent Compact will be developed. The Parent Involvement Policy will be found in the district student handbook.

Parents have an opportunity to be involved in school wide planning and evaluation, and provide feedback each year in a variety of ways, including surveys, family-friendly walkthroughs, and regular math and literacy training for families. Parent-Teacher Conferences are held in the fall and winter, and a Back to School Night is held each August. We invite parents to participate in activities that will help bridge the gap between home and school. Examples of these trainings include the following:

- Math/Literacy– we provide opportunities over the course of the year for families to come in to the school to learn about our academic programming.
- Math/Literacy Carnival – South Canyon offers a family night that explores mathematical and literary concepts through board games and literature.
- We worked with Lori Laughlin to gather data from our families through surveys and Family-Friendly Walkthroughs.
- One Open House/Meet the Teacher night is held in August, prior to the start of school.
- Family Sessions are hosted by the PTA, such as Bingo Night, Carnival and Movie Nights, and Field Day.
- Students are encouraged to attend their parent/teacher conference in the fall and winter.
- The South Canyon staff communicates with parents through weekly Friday Folder letters, school newsletters and our phone dialer system. The District also launched social media accounts through Facebook and Twitter to better communicate with our families.
- Parents receive trimester report cards.
- Parents are actively involved in the referral of their child to the RTI (Response To Intervention). Parents are active participants of the Multi-Disciplinary Assessment Team meetings for Special Services
- Monthly PTA meetings are held each school year. This year, we have a very active PTA with members who regularly attend meetings.
- Community involvement is ongoing in the form of volunteers from the Junior Achievement program, RSVP volunteers, the local fire department, and the Rapid City Rush.

7.) Transition

The Rapid City School District provides services from birth to age five for high-risk children. A child-find procedure has been established to identify those children who qualify. Children with high needs are placed in a developmental preschool. There are two communication preschool classrooms assisting three to five year-olds in speech and language. Rapid City Area Schools offer a Community Preschool Program which is open to all students three to five years of age. These programs are located in four elementary schools throughout the district, including South Canyon.

To assist transition into kindergarten, the Rapid City District's Special Services team reviews student profiles with the receiving school's team. These students are those that have been receiving services through the Birth to Five Year-Old Program or the Speech/Language Program. The district Screening Team also conducts on-site screening each spring for all students who plan to enter kindergarten the next fall. This screening includes the DIAL3 and areas of behavior, motor, concepts, speech articulation, language, vision, and hearing. The Screening Team reviews this information with parents and the Kindergarten teachers.

Head Start students are welcome to visit the South Canyon Elementary kindergarten classrooms each spring. The parents have an opportunity to meet with instructional support teachers, School Nurse, classroom teachers, and the principal for orientation.

During the first week of school in the fall, small group sessions are held for kindergarten students to assist in the transition process. These small groups of students are given the basic assessments for reading and math during this time.

Each spring, the Special Educator and Intervention Strategist from South Canyon Elementary meet with the North, West, South, East and Southwest Middle Schools' Learning Center staff to assist with the transitioning of fifth grade students from elementary school to middle school. Profiles of students who will receive additional services through an IEP, a 504 Plan, or Learning Center are shared with the staff at the receiving schools. These students who exit from fifth grade receive individual transition support at the Middle School. The Special Educator or Intervention Strategist, the student, the student's parents, and the middle school team all meet at the receiving school to transfer records, review the student's file and current levels of performance.

To assist students in transitioning to middle school, staff members from the Middle Schools come to South Canyon to present information and answer questions for the students. Additionally, each spring the fifth grade students from South Canyon elementary take a field trip to the middle schools to tour the building, receive information about scheduling and expectations, and to meet other staff members.

8.) Opportunities and expectations for teachers to be included in the decision making related to the use of academic assessment results leading to the improvement of student achievement

In a PLC, educators engage in specific tasks, which are in direct alignment with the Board of Education's three main goals. During team meetings, educators focus on the critical questions of learning and engage in the following topics:

- Identify and clarify the essential learning outcomes of each subject, grade, or course
- Develop a system of assessments designed to monitor the learning of each student.
- Collaboratively analyze and use the results of common assessments to do the following:
 - Share and identify powerful instructional strategies,
 - Improve individual practice
 - Build the team's capacity to achieve its goals, and
 - Intervene on behalf of individual students.

The following are indicators of progress that will be monitored regarding the priority of building shared background and knowledge regarding specific PLC concepts:

- Principals will be able to articulate and provide artifacts of how they have built shared background and knowledge regarding specific PLC principles, practices, concepts at their buildings.
- Principals and teachers/staff will be able to express the why, how, and what of PLC principles, practices, and concepts, and articulate the four critical questions and their interconnectedness.

The following processes will monitor the progress toward the priority of building shared background and knowledge regarding PLC concepts:

- district-wide initial/mid/end-of-year assessment that measures understanding of PLC concepts,
- building-level feedback
- written feedback that indicate understanding.

The collaborative team is the basic structure of a PLC and the engine that drives continuous improvement. In a PLC, collaboration is a systematic process in which teachers work together interdependently in order to impact their classroom practice in ways that ensure students learn. The learning target for all RCAS staff is to gain a clear understanding of the power of collaborative teams and why the school is organizing into teams, who is involved in PLC teams and how team membership is determined, when teams engage in PLC work, and most important, what the collaborative teams are expected to accomplish.

9.) Monitoring & Support

Students at South Canyon Elementary who exhibit academic or behavior difficulties receive effective and timely assistance through the RTI (Response to Intervention) model. The assessments used to determine academic progress for individual students include the following:

- Text reading levels and Benchmarking
- Letter ID
- Observation surveys
- Concepts about print (CAP)
- Writing assessments
- Hearing and recording sounds
- Math screeners
- SRI (5th only)

Response to Intervention (RTI) is a data-driven process through which individual student need is matched with a commensurate level of research-based support. We provide the level of research-based support that each student needs to be successful.

We know how much support the student needs based on our benchmark and progress monitoring data and we make decisions based on those data. This revised version of RTI is used in all RCAS school K-5th grades.

RtI addresses the first three of the four critical questions of our PLC process.

If a student does not meet special education eligibility criteria for the state of South Dakota, Tier I and Tier II interventions will continue to support student progress. The Intervention Strategist offers support for these students in reading and math. Students at South Canyon receive more instructional time by utilizing the literacy and math leaders.

The following forms of communication are used for parents of South Canyon students: RTI meetings, Friday folders, conferences, phone calls, text messages, emails, the district website, South Canyon's website, Twitter, and Facebook. Parents are invited and encouraged to come to all meetings that concern their children.

RCAS has also created a LITERACY IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION, which is a guide for our intervention strategists to use at this time. RCAS has also created a MATH IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR RESPONSE TO INTERVENTION, which will be used in the same manner.

10.) Fiscal Resources

South Canyon's Title I plan is supported by District, State and Federal funds. Our school receives General Fund, Special Education and Title I dollars to hire staff members to carry out our programming.

Our Title I funds are allocated through our district's Director of Federal Programs based on our population of students on free and reduced lunches. We determine a budget utilizing these dollars to fund teaching and paraprofessional positions, staff development, and purchasing instructional materials in the areas of literacy and math.

Throughout the year we assess student progress of our goals, discuss student work/understanding of standards and make changes as necessary to improve what we do.

South Canyon Elementary goes beyond the 10% set aside funds for professional development. 1.5 Instructional support teachers are paid out of Title I monies at South Canyon. These instructors serve as coaches and professional developers for all of our teachers, providing on the job coaching in the classrooms and after school sessions with individuals and/or small groups. Substitutes are provided so teachers can collaborate and work together.

The district has assisted all elementary schools by purchasing new Inquiry Based Math material, including Dreambox. RCAS offers math classes throughout the school year which teachers have the opportunity to take.