

ORGANIZED FOR LEARNING



TEST SCORES DICTATE EHS SCHOOL ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES FOR 2008-2009 SCHOOL YEAR

~Lynda E. Irvin, Superintendent of Schools

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WHAT?

The 2008-2009 school year brings many changes for our school district. Since 2006, ECUSD#4 has not met the criteria score for Reading at the EHS level as established by the National Legislation No Child Left Behind's Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). In fact, our Reading test scores at the high school level have gone down each subsequent year. To add insult to injury, the test score to make AYP has gone up each year since 2007 and will be 70% of all students meeting or exceeding state standards for the school year 2009.

SO WHAT?

Our EHS faculty spent last school year studying our student data to look for trends over time to see if we could isolate the issues that were becoming barriers to our student achievement. The following issues emerged from that year long study.

1. Our student did not have good organizational study skills. In

speaking with a random sample of current EHS students and graduates over the past 5 years, they shared that they had difficulty with organizing essays, completing an outline of material necessary for studying for a test, writing short answers to questions that required a reason to prove a point, taking notes, and in general, being prepared for life beyond high school.

2. Our students needed greater time accessing technology as a tool to assist them in word processing, editing, outlining, & organizing their ideas in written language.



Now is the Time for Edinburg!!!

3. Our curriculum does not always reflect rigor and alignment to the Illinois Standards for Learning. Often times EHS students would elect to drop a class if the expectations for letter grades exceeded the amount of work a student was willing to do in that class for that grade.
4. Increasingly, our sports teams were being hit with ineligible players with regard to grades.
5. We had increasing overlap in curriculum areas in grades 6-12 and no common planning time for teachers in the same subject areas as well as no consistent opportunities to share materials and resources between EJHS and EHS staff.

In summary, the expectations for schooling at the state and national level were changing and the issue of accountability through test scores were and are confronting our school district. **"NOW WHAT?" emerges from faculty study groups as our state required plan.**

Special points of interest:

Red Score : EHS

Black Score:

Required Score for meeting AYP

✓ **2008:**

Reading **29.6**/62.5%

Math **48.1**/62.5%

✓ **2007:**

Reading **34.8**/55%

Math **39.1**/55%

✓ **2006:**

Reading **46.4**/47.5%

Math **35.7**/47.5%

✓ **2005:**

Reading **51.9**/47.5%

Math **33.3**/47.5%

Inside this issue:

NOW WHAT? Implementation	2
School Improvement Planning	2
Freshman Seminar	2
Technology Update	2
New Organization for Students	3
Common CORE Planning Times	3
School Board Appreciation	4

NOW WHAT?

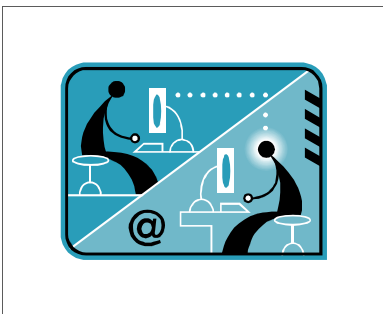
An Illinois Required School Improvement Plan

The state of Illinois requires schools that do not make AYP to file a vetted school improvement plan. ECUSD #4 was required to do so by March 1, 2008. The plan had to be on research-based instructional best practices, and data-driven, faculty planned, Board of Education approved, and vetted by third party groups to insure that all criteria were met.

Our state required third parties vetting team included Dr. Harvey Smith, the founder and director of the Illinois Interactive Report Card (IIRC), our Regional Office of Education (ROE) #10 Marie Joy and Meg Dees, Dr. Jed Deets, our RESPRO Director from the state of Illinois, Dr. Brent McArtle, former EHS principal and recently retired Superintendent from Lexington CUSD #7, and our financial expert, Dr. Norman Durlinger, Director of the Center for Educational Policy and Leadership at Illinois State University and retired Superintendent of the Morton School District.

Our plan consisted of the following parts:

A.. We needed to find a research based, best practice intervention to focus our students' energy and expertise in better study skills and



“Students do not learn technology, but learn through technology.”

preparation for high school academic rigor. In seeking what met our criteria, the John Hopkins University's Freshman Seminar came front and center.

This nationally recognized program consists of 8 units of study including goal setting, efficient and effective study skills, conflict resolution, technology driven learning and teaching, test preparation skills, career choice path development as well as advanced organizers to help students make and keep commitments to themselves and others.

Even better, John Hopkins University was coming for the first time to the Midwest and was looking for four school districts who were struggling with AYP in central Illinois (**Did anyone say Edinburg? YES!**). We made the commitment and Tom Jeffers, Jamie Hefner, Kristi Likes, and Michelle Reiss with coach Lynda Irvin went to Litchfield for training this August for implementation this school year.

John Hopkins is very interested in us because we are taking their concept 7-12 and creating our own seminars in grades 7, 8, 10, 11, and 12 and attaching the seminars to either English or Social Studies classes at each level; thus, giving our students two periods daily back-to-back concentrating on written language, reading, and comprehension. More importantly, we are hoping for a BINGO here not only on our test scores, but also on the skill sets being taught through the John Hopkins Seminar model. Even better news is the fact that none of the training and resource materials is costing the district any local tax money, but is being paid for by the Illinois State Board of Education through its RESPRO services to schools who did not make AYP.

B. Technology access and use became a huge part of our equation for success through our Organized for Learning plan. Our district technology committee has met for the last year and helped resolve many issues with several generations of computers of varying ages and software concerns and have translated those issues into an aligned, efficient, and organized plan and implementation of a focused, learner centered project with the help of Computer Techniques Incorporated (CTI) in Taylorville. Through the leadership of Board of Education members Mark LeVault, Ed Hughes, Dennis Wise, and principal, Matt Graham, we are now on track to move forward with the goal of independent and successful computer users for both students and staff.

The John Hopkins Seminar classes are taught concepts through English and Social Studies with computer driven classroom projects through the purchase of 35 Asus mini laptops costing the district \$6,000 as the cost was matched by the ECUSD #4 Foundation! Thus, computers available daily in all seminar classes as needed.

In addition, the Technology committee will be bringing to the Board of Education another proposal for updating our Business Lab in the high school with computers that will be able to make Edinburg state-of-the-art in Web Design, Accounting, Graphic Design, and Microsoft Office Suite. How can we afford such a program? Edinburg Schools receive \$1,000 per month to lease our air space through the Unisom group. We will be taking that funding into a computer lease or buy program so that no local dollars will be spent to pay for this new

ECUSD #4 is...

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Technology initiative! The current business lab of computers will then be used to update our West Wing computer lab as well as classrooms. We hope to be "on time, on budget, and on board" by our second semester January 5, 2009 start date.

- C. We eliminated study halls and put seminar in their place in the schedule. Too often our students arrived at study hall not remembering how to do their homework assignments or committed to a true study experience. Each EHS teacher committed to giving time in class to helping students get a firm start on their homework; thus, giving the student time with the teacher who made the assignment as well as giving the teacher "just in time" feedback as to the students' levels of understanding of the concepts needed for successful learning practice in the homework setting.
- In addition, students are no longer able to drop a class after the first week of a new semester. They must make and keep their commitments for each course and as faculty and staff make a commitment to students to assist them in learning the course materials and concepts throughout their time together. As faculty and staff, we can not do the work for students, but we can make it possible for students who are committed to trying and learning to the best of their potential to be successful.
- D. We need all of our students to be successful and research tells us that students who are involved in extracurricular activities such as clubs and sports tend to be more successful in learning than those who do not participate. Our Board of Education adopted extracurricular handbook addresses the issue and makes a commitment to students who are scholars first. This policy and procedures manual stresses the need for students to receive additional help in their subjects in order to meet our primary focus of learning while participating in extracurricular activities and sports. At Edinburg CUSD#4, we want to educate the "Whole Child" and we know that strong minds and strong bodies support life long success.
- E. The most critical element was giving our 7-12 teachers common planning time on a daily basis in their core content areas. Teachers had never experienced daily planning with their concept teacher before this school year. Now Math, English, Social Studies, and Science teachers (7-12 share common planning time, resources, and report monthly on their curriculum time lines matching the Illinois Standards for their subject areas with their daily learning and teaching assignments. This also meant movement of classroom assignments to EHS part of the building. The EJHS staff would also need to help teach some high school classes in order for the seminar experience to work for all students 7-12. Some parents were initially concerned about mixing EJHS and EHS students during the school day; however, the true reality was that students K-12 had always been mixed throughout the school day and the data collected confirmed that this in fact was a true and accurate statement. Arrangements were made to have EJHS and EHS students travel alternatively the hallways between classes

We are happy to report that the transition for EJHS and EHS has been very smooth and seamless. To date of publication, there have been no altercations between and among EJHS and EHS students. Teachers stand in the hallways during the change of classes as well as the superintendent and principal; thus, creating firm, fair, safe passing periods for all students regardless of age or class assignments. We tackled several concerns in our planning process and are moving ahead with monthly small group CORE meetings of the EHS, EJHS, Intermediate, Primary, and ALL CORE (Art, Music, and Physical Education) to constantly monitor, adjust, and modify our implementation of our Organized for Learning School Improvement Plan to ensure that our decisions are learner-centered, data-driven, research based best instructional practice, and age appropriate.

Imagine the Possibilities...

Improved Learning, Teaching, and Student Achievement!



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www.edinburgschools.net



**Edinburg CUSD #4 School
Board Meetings are the Sec-
ond Thursday of each month @
7:00 PM in Room 144.**

*School Board
Recognition Day
November 15, 2008*

So what job can seven people do together with one voice/one vote and not get paid for all their time, energy, and effort often clocking over 10 hours per month? You guessed it...School Board Member!

The Illinois Association of School Boards' is sponsoring School Board Recognition Day on Saturday, November 15, 2008. **Here in Edinburg, the staff and administration is inviting our ECUSD #4 Board of Education members to breakfast @ 9:00 AM at Jan's Bar & Grill.** We invite the public to attend and the one catch is you will need to buy your own breakfast and/or cup of coffee that morning.

Please stop by to give these seven folks a pat on the back and recognize all they do for our students, staff, and community! Sure, we don't always agree on everything, but no one can dispute their motivation, commitment, and time these seven folks give each and every month to help our school district be a better place to learn and grow for all students. Thanks folks!