

School Improvement Plan Template and School Audit Tool

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School Improvement Plan Template

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School Improvement Plan Cover Page

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| Danbury Public Schools | | |
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| Signature of Superintendent: | | Date: |
| | | |



School Improvement Plan

Directions: Provide a comprehensive, bold, and transformative plan to dramatically improve student achievement. Identify school strengths and growth areas, and use this analysis to inform the selection of school goals and reform strategies. Articulate strategies to advance school performance in the areas of talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations.

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| <p>Section 1: Needs Analysis. The school must provide a thorough needs analysis informed by the school audit tool. In the space provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarize the school’s greatest strengths. • Summarize and provide a root cause analysis for the school’s most significant growth areas. • Complete and submit Appendix A: School Audit Tool to inform the needs analysis. | |
| Strength: | Explanation and data to substantiate: |
| Instructional leadership | Danbury High School has partnered with the Nellie Mae Foundation and one of the grant requirements is an external evaluation by EDC of our student-centered practices. EDC conducted focus groups with teachers and students, observed classes, and surveyed teachers and students. The information contained in that report was also utilized as part of the needs analysis. The report highlighted the strength of the administrative team in leading change efforts to impact student achievement. |
| Professional development | <p>The Nellie Mae report also indicated improved teacher satisfaction with professional development. There have been almost 100 days of job-embedded coaching for staff and satisfaction survey data consistently reflect an average of 80% satisfaction. Each Data Team completed a Professional Learning Plan where teachers were given the autonomy to identify needed learning to realize the school goal of “implementing CCSS in student-centered classrooms” to ensure that professional development is appropriately differentiated.</p> <p>Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Coaches also collect professional development data (e.g., number of teachers requesting services, types of requests made by teachers for assistance, etc.) that are used to monitor degree of implementation in the classroom.</p> |
| Use of data | Data are regularly collected and analyzed to inform decisions. Attendance (student and staff), referral, discipline, adult inputs (e.g., dominant instructional elements, degree of student-centeredness, level of questioning), course pass rates, benchmark, and legacy test results are routinely analyzed. All recent improvement efforts made have a foundational data set that was used to guide strategy design. |
| Growth Area: | Explanation and data to substantiate: |
| Academic rigor | In 2013-14, the Instructional Development Team, comprised of district leadership, conducted an Instructional Review in the fall and spring. During the Review, every teacher was scheduled to be visited and team members observed the entire period to see bell-to-bell instruction. Findings indicate |



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| | <p>that there is additional work to be done to ensure every class is challenging all students and holding them accountable for higher-order thinking.</p> <p>The School Data Team, comprised of representatives from each department, analyzes course pass rates and standardized test scores. While notable improvements have been made (SPI was met and DHS was 1 point from exiting Review School status), there is still a need to increase expectations for students.</p> |
| Differentiation | <p>Monthly Data Rounds process is in place where administrators and department heads visit every classroom to collect data on implementation of school focal points (e.g., student-centered lessons, differentiation) and provide teachers with regular feedback. These data are used formatively and not evaluatively. Data are collected at the department level, reviewed by the School Data and Administrative Leadership Team, and shared by teacher representatives in department meetings. Differentiation is an area that continues to be a focus for DHS and has been since the school was de-tracked and an open enrollment policy was put in place.</p> |
| Instructional practice | <p>School Governance Council met monthly and analyzed student attendance and course pass rates.</p> <p>Monthly Data Rounds shows continued work is needed in the area of higher-order questioning and student-centered practices (although significant growth has been noted).</p> |
| Support for special populations | <p>The Danbury High School leadership team meets weekly to analyze attendance and referral/discipline data. On a quarterly basis, we review Instructional Data Team Common Formative Assessment results and course pass rates.</p> <p>The Deans of Student Support, who provide strategic support to our at-risk and repeat freshmen, regularly analyze attendance, credit accrual, course pass rates, and discipline data for these special populations. While data reflect significant improvements with both at-risk and repeat freshmen, there is still much room for improvement when comparing their performance to the freshmen.</p> |
| Family engagement | <p>Despite efforts to engage families, we continue to struggle with getting regular participation from parents/guardians. PTO meetings generally have less than 10 parents participate. ESL Open House had less than 30 attendees (child care, translators, and food provided).</p> |
| <p>Section 2: Overarching SMART Goals. Successful and sustainable turnaround requires a focused approach on the school's most pressing needs and challenges. Please reflect upon school data and the school audit to identify a manageable set of priorities to guide the school's turnaround efforts. Develop three goals for the turnaround process that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented and Time-bound.</p> | |
| <p>Goal #1: 3% increase on Spring 2015 benchmark from Fall 2014 benchmark in all tested areas for the following subgroups: Total, Asian, and White.</p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Specific <input type="checkbox"/> Measurable <input type="checkbox"/> Attainable <input type="checkbox"/> Results-oriented</p> |



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| 6% increase on Spring 2015 benchmark from Fall 2014 benchmark in all tested areas for the following subgroups: Black, Hispanic, ELL, FRL, and SPED. | <input type="checkbox"/> Time-bound |
| <p>Goal #2: 3% decrease in number of All, White, Asian, Black, and SPED students with 20 or more absences for the 2014-2015 school year, based on 2012-2013 baseline data.</p> <p>6% decrease in the number of Hispanic, ELL, and FRL students with 20 or more absences for the 2014-2015 school year, based on 2012-2013 baseline data.</p> | <input type="checkbox"/> Specific <input type="checkbox"/> Measurable <input type="checkbox"/> Attainable <input type="checkbox"/> Results-oriented <input type="checkbox"/> Time-bound |
| <p>Goal #3: 5% decrease in the number of ninth graders who are retained for the 2014-2015 school year, based on 2011-2012 baseline data.</p> | <input type="checkbox"/> Specific <input type="checkbox"/> Measurable <input type="checkbox"/> Attainable <input type="checkbox"/> Results-oriented <input type="checkbox"/> Time-bound |
| <p>Section 3: Talent. The school must employ systems and strategies to recruit, hire, develop, evaluate, and retain excellent school leaders, teachers, and support staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how the district and school will cultivate a professional learning environment to attract, support, develop, and retain high-quality teachers and leaders. • Explain how administrators will have the ability to staff the school based exclusively on student and programmatic needs. • Describe how teachers will be evaluated on an annual basis to inform professional development offerings and staffing decisions. • Explain how administrators will be evaluated on an annual basis to inform leadership staffing decisions. Describe ongoing supports and coaching opportunities for school leadership. | |
| <p>DPS has a much lower salary scale than surrounding towns so attracting teachers to the area can be a challenge. This year the district is planning to investigate participating in recruitment fairs, with a particular emphasis on finding minority applicants. New teachers are given a one-week orientation before the start of school and are assigned a mentor. DHS begins hiring as soon as openings are announced so there is enough time to find the right person. The hiring process was revised to require all candidates to provide a writing sample and do a demonstration lesson. The interview committee always includes leadership and teachers from the department. In addition to TEAM and district support, DHS provides monthly professional development to all new teachers that is delivered by teacher leaders.</p> | |
| <p>DHS creates a new schedule for students every year. The master schedule is built exclusively on student requests and staffing is adjusted to meet student needs. The administration has the autonomy to determine how to use staffing (e.g., cut position from one department to move to another). Within the Full-time Employee (FTE) count, administration has made adjustments to class size for certain populations. For example, students who score Basic or below on the CMT reading in 8th grade are required to take a Reading Lab. This class is capped at 15. In order for the class sizes to be kept small, administration repurposed a Business teacher line to allow for the additional FTE in Reading.</p> | |
| <p>Teachers and administrators are both evaluated in accordance with the DPS Teacher Evaluation and Professional Learning requirements. This plan is new and represents a shift in teacher evaluation that places an emphasis on teacher development and provides the structure and process to integrate professional practice and student performance. This year, DPS adopted Robert Marzano's <i>The Art and Science of Teaching Framework</i> as a model of exemplary instructional practices and tools that allow teachers to set personal goals to improve their practice. Administrators utilize the <i>School Leaders Framework</i>. Both frameworks include an</p> | |

online platform that supports discussion boards and includes a library of supporting materials and videos connected to the framework. New teachers have three full formal observations with pre and post conferences, in addition to three mini-observations each year. Tenured, proficient staff have at least one full formal observation with pre and post conferences, in addition to two mini-observations a year. Teachers and administrators both participate in goal-setting meetings to determine focus areas of growth for the year. To support teachers and administrators with adopting the new model, the district also purchased online modules to support teachers and administrators who wish to learn at their own pace. Lastly, the district hired a Principal Coach/External Validator to support administrators in the implementation of the new framework.

Section 4: Academics. The school must design and implement a rigorous, aligned, and engaging academic program that allows all students to achieve at high levels:

- Describe the school's literacy strategy, including targeted interventions.
- Describe how staff will use data to inform lesson plans, differentiate instruction, and provide remedial support to meet the academic and development needs of all students.
- Describe ongoing professional development opportunities to build staff capacity around the collection, analysis, and use of data to drive and differentiate instruction.

Over 50 curricula and associated benchmarks aligned to the CCSS have been created by teachers in the last four years. We have adopted the CCSS claims as our learning expectations and utilize the SBAC writing rubrics in all departments. Elective Data Teams have focused on writing for most of their CFAs and social studies classes utilize DBQs which require focused reading and writing. Our CAPT writing scores have dramatically improved in the last three years because of our targeted approach to spreading writing across all content areas. Next year, we will shift our focus to reading. Curricula include common end of unit assessments and the resulting data are analyzed by departments to inform revision and/or share best practice.

Teachers in Data Teams create CFAs and then meet to collaboratively analyze results and plan lessons according to student need. Next year, this will happen more frequently as the district calendar now reflects early release days twice a month. Department meetings will be scheduled in conjunction with these days to provide teachers with a 2-hour block of time to engage in collaborative reflection and planning.

DHS has an SRBI framework that requires teachers to implement and record two in-class interventions for any student who is in danger of failing. Students who receive two failing grades in a marking period are designated to be in need of Tier 2 Intervention. In addition to a parent/guardian meeting, students are also withdrawn from study hall and/or an elective and are scheduled into the Student Tutoring Center (STC). Freshmen who are in danger of failing are scheduled into Directed Study Hall in the Freshman Academy. Any student can refer him/herself to the STC during an off period or after school. The STC is staffed with a certified teacher and content interventionists who work with students in small groups.

Incoming freshmen who are at or below the basic level in middle school in reading or math are required to take a Reading and/or Math Lab class. ESL 2 and 3 students take English 1 concurrently on a pass/fail basis. We have remedial reading courses for students in need and offer Credit Recovery software for credit or as an intervention.

Professional development around data and CFAs were provided when Data Teams were created in 2009. After Data Teams were in place, staff received professional development in departments and Data Teams on differentiation and student-centered approaches. Differentiation continues to be an area of concern and next year we will provide staff with professional development to streamline the Data Team and SRBI processes to support staff with how to differentiate and intervene in response to data.

Section 5: Culture and Climate. The school must foster a positive learning environment that supports high-

quality teaching and learning, and engages families and the community as partners in the educational process:

- Describe the school's behavior management system and strategies to shape a positive school culture.
- Explain how the school will promote strong family and community connections to support academic achievement.

There are four assistant principals and one School Climate Specialist who manage discipline referrals. There is a DHS Discipline Code that is used effectively to ensure that infractions are handled the same way for the same offenses. A progressive approach is utilized and students are referred to the Crisis Counselor when needed. Consistency and support are the keys to the positive school climate at DHS. The Discipline Code and other important school information are included in our Student Handbook that is translated into Spanish and Portuguese. The Handbook is reviewed with students at the beginning of the year and parents are made aware of it via School Messenger calls, website, and the Principal's Newsletter.

Several evening events are held throughout the year to build and strengthen connections. Open House, ESL Open House, Incoming Freshman Orientation, summer tours, financial aid assistance (in English and in Spanish), summer acceleration program, and student-led conferences are just a few examples of ways DHS engages families.

DHS has an advisory program to support strong connections. Students meet weekly in advisory and remain with the same teacher and group of students for the duration of their time at DHS to support personalized learning. Student Success Plans are created each year and stored in Naviance so information can be shared with staff and families.

School-family connections are forged through various organizations, courses, and events. The following are a few examples of how DHS promotes connections while simultaneously supporting academic achievements:

- Student-run day care;
- Student-run restaurant;
- Student-run auto shop;
- Highly decorated AFJROTC unit;
- Award-winning student-run newspaper;
- Student-run literary magazine;
- Largest National Arts Honor Society in the country;
- Award-winning robotics program;
- Open enrollment
- 23 AP courses;
- After-school clubs;
- Over 230 courses offered; and
- 56 athletic teams.

Section 6: Operations. The school must create systems and processes that promote organizational efficiency and effectiveness, including through the use of time and financial resources:

- Describe the length of the school day and year for students, and describe how the proposed schedule will maximize instructional time on task.
- Describe the length of the school day and year for staff, including additional time before and during the school year for professional development and/or common planning time.

School starts at 7:05 for staff and 7:20 for students. School ends at 2:00 for students and 2:20 for staff. The

Freshman Academy utilizes an A/B block to minimize transition and maximize instructional time. Currently, extended learning opportunities are available twice a week after school until 4:00 in our Student Tutoring Center. Late buses are provided to students. This plan seeks to expand the tutoring to a Twilight School approach that would run from 2:00-4:00 to provide additional time for students (pending grant funding needed to support expansion). This plan also seeks to explore a 4x4 block for the Freshman Academy.

School begins on August 18 for new teachers, August 21 for remaining staff, and August 25 for students. The last day for students is June 17 and the last day for staff is June 18. Next year, most half-days have been eliminated and the district is moving to an early release model that will increase the number of instructional hours for students while increasing the amount of time for teachers to work collaboratively after school. Staff will have a one-hour faculty meeting, and two Department/Data Team meetings for two hours twice a month. Freshman Academy and 9R teams have a common planning period for their duty.

Section 7: Stakeholder Engagement. In the space provided, describe stakeholder engagement throughout the turnaround planning process. Provide evidence that school and district personnel, School Governance Council members, parents, students and community members were engaged in the planning process and/or are aware the contents of this plan.

The School Data Team (SDT), comprised of administrators, department heads, and teachers, met regularly this year to conduct data analysis and responsive strategies. Many improvement strategies that were discussed are reflected in this plan. The SDT will participate in monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of this plan throughout the 2014-2015 school year.

The School Governance Council (SGC), comprised of faculty, parents, community members, and students, has been extremely active in analyzing achievement and attendance data throughout the year. The SGC subdivided into four working committees: Technology, Parent Engagement, Student Attendance, and Student Achievement. These subcommittees conducted monthly analyses of several data points germane to their focus. Many improvement strategies that were discussed are reflected in this plan. This plan was reviewed by the SGC at their March 2014 meeting.

The Parent Teacher Organization has not met since the fall. This plan will be shared at the next scheduled meeting (April 28th). The plan will be posted on our website and a School Messenger call will be made to apprise our community of its location.

| Section 8: Implementation Timeline. Using the chart below, please summarize key strategies presented in this plan in the areas of talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations (add rows, as necessary). Identify progress metrics and when each strategy will be implemented. | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--------|----|----|----|--------|----|----|----|
| Strategy: | Progress Metric: | Year 1 | | | | Year 2 | | | |
| | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| TALENT: | | | | | | | | | |
| Provide all teachers with job-embedded professional development to support Marzano framework and SIOP, as well as after school and “lunch and learn” sessions offered by SIOP Coaches | Increase in percentage of teachers implementing student-centered strategies, as measured by Data Rounds | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| All administrators and department heads will participate in extensive professional development to support the implementation of the Marzano Instructional Framework, as part of the new teacher evaluation process. School-based follow up support will be provided in addition to the district schedule of coaching. | Increase in the inter-rater reliability of all evaluators, as measured by calibration exercises and collaborative classroom observations | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Strategic assignment of SIOP coaches to ensure that our struggling teachers have access to assistance in the areas of lesson development, delivery, and assessment. | Increase in the number of teachers working with SIOP coaches | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Provide monthly professional development for new teachers. | Increase in the number of new teachers who have a successful first year and return | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Create professional development to support teachers with teaching literacy in the content areas to be delivered monthly in department meetings (pending funding). | Increase in number of teachers embedding literacy strategies Increase in benchmark performance | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| ACADEMICS: | | | | | | | | | |
| Provide ESL students with discontinuous or no formal education with additional supports in foundational literacy and acculturation course, “Culture, Language & Civics”. Students will take this double period course in addition to ESL I to provide them with extensive support in literacy development that ranges from phoneme awareness and the formation of letters, to the task of writing and reading words from a high-frequency word list. Students will also receive instruction in civics and acculturation from school counselors and guest speakers. Pilot numeracy component in 2014-2015. | Increased literacy proficiency, as measured by LAS benchmarks | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Provide department time for teachers to meet in Instructional Data | Improved CFA results, based on | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |

| Section 8: Implementation Timeline. Using the chart below, please summarize key strategies presented in this plan in the areas of talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations (add rows, as necessary). Identify progress metrics and when each strategy will be implemented. | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|----------------|----|----|----|--------|----|----|----|
| Strategy: | Progress Metric: | Year 1 | | | | Year 2 | | | |
| | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| Teams and assign administrators and department heads to each of the 27 teams to provide oversight. A system of data collection has been designed on Google Docs to allow for transparency and real-time feedback to Data Teams. | pre/post cycle | | | | | | | | |
| The Deans of Student Support will continue to work with at-risk and retained students to provide more support and monitoring. Home visits, attendance contracts, and frequent parent meetings will occur with students, as needed. | Improved attendance for students who are assigned to Dean of Student Support caseload | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Directed Study Halls held in the Freshman Academy office where students will receive small group instruction from interventionists and support from guidance counselors, as needed. | Increase in the number of students who are successful in core courses after receiving Directed Study Hall support | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Students At Risk (STAR) Program for incoming freshmen who were identified as being at-risk in 8 th grade. Expanding to 4 weeks and now will including programming for 6 th and 7 th graders. | Increase in credit accrual for Semester 1 (as compared to 8 th grade) | Summer program | | | | | | | |
| Organize Instructional Rounds for teachers interested in visiting colleague's classrooms to support sharing of best practice. Possibly expand to include middle schools Semester 2 (pending funding). | Increase in the number of teachers conducting peer observations and incorporating new techniques | | | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| SIOP Coaches will offer monthly professional development after school and repeat session during lunch periods. Topics determined by needs as evidenced by observations and Data Rounds. | Increase in the number of SIOP techniques being implemented | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| CULTURE AND CLIMATE: | | | | | | | | | |
| Guidance Data Team will meet formally once a month with administration to monitor the impact of attendance strategies with students who are chronically absent and/or have multiple course failures. | Increase in the number of Tier 2 meetings | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Frequent monitoring to ensure that the SRBI protocol for students with attendance issues is followed. Administration will review data monthly and follow up with counselors and attendance office as needed. | Increase in the number of SRBI Tier 2 meetings | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Utilize School Messenger System to call home twice a day when students are absent. Translated into appropriate language. | Decrease in the number of unexcused absences | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |

| Section 8: Implementation Timeline. Using the chart below, please summarize key strategies presented in this plan in the areas of talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations (add rows, as necessary). Identify progress metrics and when each strategy will be implemented. | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|--------|----|----|----|--------|----|----|----|
| Strategy: | Progress Metric: | Year 1 | | | | Year 2 | | | |
| | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| Provide parent outreach programs at least four times a year with food, Spanish and Portuguese translators, and child care. Programs to focus on ways to help students be successful in school, tools for parents to communicate with school, and other topics as identified. | Improved parent/guardian satisfaction on school communication indicators | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Expand the number of student-led conferences occurring in the Freshman Academy. | Increase in the number of students and parents/guardians participating in student-led conferences | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Quarterly focus groups with representative samples of students to monitor their perceptions on degree of student-centered support and additional suggestions. | Improved communication between administration and students | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| School Climate Specialist will support administration by processing student referrals and build relationships with students | Decreased number of ISS and OSS | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| OPERATIONS: | | | | | | | | | |
| Incoming repeat freshmen and any student with more than 1 failure in a core course who has a study hall will be scheduled into a Directed Study Hall, held in the Student Tutoring Center. | Decrease in the number of students with multiple course failures | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Student Tutoring Center staffed with 7 interventionists, certified teacher, and overseen by Student Tutoring Center Manager. Available to any student who needs assistance, every period of the day and 2 days after school with a late bus. Credit recovery software is available for students to utilize as additional support. | Increased participation in after-school support sessions | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Eliminate one faculty meeting a month to provide additional time for staff to work in Data Teams. | Increase in the number of minutes staff have to collaborate | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Begin Twilight School for students who are behind in credits. Twilight School will start after regular dismissal and students will stay for 2 hours after the end of the school day with certified teachers in a blended learning environment (pending grant award). Pilot use in a staggered schedule as an intervention for students consistently late to school. | Decrease in the number of retained students | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |
| Proposed elimination of midterm/final examination schedule to | Increase in the number of | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |

Section 8: Implementation Timeline. Using the chart below, please summarize key strategies presented in this plan in the areas of talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations (add rows, as necessary). Identify progress metrics and when each strategy will be implemented.

| Strategy: | Progress Metric: | Year 1 | | | | Year 2 | | | |
|--|--|--------|----|----|----|--------|----|----|----|
| | | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 | Q1 | Q2 | Q3 | Q4 |
| recapture over 2 weeks of instructional time (pending Superintendent and BOE approval). | instructional hours | | | | | | | | |
| Refresh of all technology to ensure all teachers have a laptop and projector. Computer labs to be replaced and student Chromebook carts to be purchased. | Increase in learning opportunities supported by technology | X | X | X | X | X | X | X | X |

