



**School Improvement External Team Visitation
Report for Nebraska Framework Schools**



**Brett Richards, Superintendent
Dr. Mark Adler, Team Leader
Dr. Cecilia Wilken, Team Leader**

Date of Visit: November 12-14, 2019

External Visitation Team

School Improvement External Team

Dr. Mark Adler, Superintendent of Ralston Public Schools

Dr. Cecilia Wilken, Director of Teaching & Learning in Ralston Public Schools

Ryan Pivonka, High School Assistant Principal in Ralston Public Schools

Jason Fink, Director of Technology in Ralston Public Schools

Dawn Marten, Director of Learning in DC West Community Schools

Adrienne Kennedy, Special Education Teacher in Elkhorn Public Schools

Robbie Jensen, Digital Learning Coordinator at ESU3

I. District Overview

Springfield Platteview Community Schools serves approximately 1160 students in grades PK-12 at four campus locations to include Westmont Elementary, Springfield Elementary, Platteview Central Middle School, and Springfield Platteview High School. Springfield Platteview Community Schools is governed by a six member board of education and covers approximately 92 square miles located on the southern edge of the Omaha Metropolitan Area. The primary vocation within the District would be agriculture with a large amount of property within the District consisting of farms and acreages. Springfield Platteview Community Schools boasts a graduation rate of 98% and enjoys a well educated professional staff where 67% of teachers hold a Masters degree. Academic performance is strong as evidenced by approximately 85% of students at or above the norm in both Math and Reading. Springfield Platteview Community Schools is a 1:1 technology enhanced school for all K-12 students and staff, offers 15 dual credit courses, and enjoys 90% of their high school students participating in at least one extra curricular activity.

II. Description of the Continuous Improvement Process:

The district and school improvement processes are built on the Standards for Success within their district strategic plan. The Continuous Improvement Model at Springfield Platteview Public Schools is cyclical in nature. The model cycles from Springfield Platteview's mission and vision, strategic plan goals and standards for success, data analysis and needs, school improvement committees and research, school improvement plans and best practices, and professional development and collaboration.

The Standards for Success are the core of the school improvement work and are comprised of a focus on school culture, curriculum/academics/extracurricular programs, teacher effectiveness, stakeholder involvement, and leadership/operations. There is a district leadership team for each of these 5 areas, that is comprised of staff from each building. These members rotate every two

years. Each building has a building leadership team that oversees the 5 teams. The district and building teams meet throughout the year to focus on the district-wide action plans and improvement goals below that support the strategic plan. Every staff member is on one of these teams. At the end of each year, the district has an Administrative Retreat where they review the goals of the district and school, report on progress, and discuss the next steps for success.

III. School Improvement Goals

Goal 1: SPCS will consistently (continuously) offer comprehensive academic pathways leading to college and career opportunities for all students.

Goal 2: By 2022, SPCS will provide the facilities and staffing needed to keep up with the growth and be competitive with other metro area schools in curricular and activities programs.

Goal 3: By August 2018, SPCS will create an Alumni and Friends Society to build outreach with alumni and friends of the district to increase communication, build relationships, coordinate activities, and enhance fundraising to support students, staff, and programs in the district.

Goal 4: SPCS will research and implement literacy strategies that will increase proficiency scores across local, state and national testing.

IV. Commendations:

- **Positive Culture and Climate including strong parent support.** The external visitation team was overwhelmed with the high levels of commitment, collaboration, caring, and positive inertia within the schools, district, and the community. School leaders along with school staff are constantly working on effective school factors within the Standards for Success model. The external evaluation team found strong evidence for commitment to continuous improvement and focus on evaluating and creating a positive school climate and culture. All schools in the district have an active culture committee. External team members continuously mentioned the positive feel or vibe they experienced during the visit at every campus location. It was easy to see how this positive inertia helped to develop a school environment conducive to student learning and success. During one interview a parent explained, “When you walk in the front door it just feels different.”
- **Dedicated, Caring, and Empowered school staff.** In any education system the heart and spirit of service and leadership to the students and community rests with a quality and dedicated staff. Information collected through interviews and artifacts clearly outlines the Springfield Platteview Community Schools staff is dedicated to serving the students under their care. One teacher commented, these are my kids and we will do whatever it takes to help them learn and succeed. The overwhelmingly positive school culture and climate is a direct result of the dedicated staff. School staff feel empowered to serve the students under their care and make a difference each and every day. During interviews a high number of staff mentioned the support they feel from the administration to try new things in the classroom and to get the needed professional development to

keep moving in a positive direction to serve students. When talking with students, feedback was overwhelming in how they felt about their teachers and the support the teachers provide to the students. One high school student said, “I can talk with any of my teachers and I trust them.” Collaboration and cooperation was evident in talking with school staff at all levels. A deliberate effort to provide common planning time in many areas has allowed for global planning as well as specific and deliberate student progress monitoring. School staff are proud of the work they do and are excited to be a member of the Springfield Platteview Community Schools team.

- **Leadership: Effective and Quality Board of Education, District and Building Administration, and Teacher Leadership.** Leadership was a prominent theme identified and recognized by all external visitation team members while visiting the Springfield Platteview Community Schools. Employees were very proud to say they served the students and community of the Springfield Platteview Community Schools and they took that responsibility very seriously. Through interviews and informal conversations it was evident that school staff respected their principals and District level administrators as they felt supported and valued as team members and colleagues. School staff was grateful for the leaders they had in the organization. Finally and maybe most importantly, it was clear that the Board of Education was engaged and worked very hard to serve the students, staff, and community. The Board of Education was extremely informed and had developed quality relationships with the administration, community stakeholders, and each other. The Board is very aware of their responsibilities, trusts the administration to carry out their responsibilities, and advocates fiercely to continue to bring positive inertia to the organization. The external visitation team could easily see a hands on collaborative leadership approach starting with the Superintendent and filtering through the organization. The Superintendent has created a clear vision for the organization as it relates to school improvement and he has established multiple committees so everyone can have a level of ownership and involvement in the process. It was exciting to see how that vision came to life through the committee work and under the leadership of the teachers.
- **Facilities and Technology.** Although some of the facilities visited during the visit were many years old, it was very evident that much care and planning had been put into facility upgrades, maintenance, and cleaning processes. All facilities were well kept and clean. Safety and security was a point of emphasis at every location while still providing a welcoming feel at each campus. It was easy to see the focus on technology as students and teachers were provided computers or ipads and the supporting systems such as wireless systems, software, and web tools were well ahead of many schools in Nebraska. This level of support for facilities and technology requires incredible effort and support from the Board of Education, administration, students, and staff. Through interviews it was clear that school staff and students appreciated the investment that has been made in employing two full time technology support specialists. School staff raved about the work and support of the technology integration specialist. The Platteview Community Schools have been deliberate and fiscally responsible in their approach to school renovations and funding for facility upgrades as they anticipate increasing student growth in the years to come. It is clear that a focus on creating exceptional learning environments in the future will be the goal at all levels of the organization.

V. Recommendations for Next Steps in the Overall School Improvement Process

The recommendations below are the next steps that the External team recommends for Springfield Platteview Public Schools. The level of community, reflectiveness, trust, and leadership, will maximize the impact these recommendations would have on Springfield Platteview students.

Recommendation 1: Identify and implement a districtwide PK-12 MTSS structure that incorporates a systematic intervention program and process.

During the visit, staff at the elementary level expressed that they have data teams that meet to discuss student needs. NWEA MAP Growth is used to identify how students are progressing, along with DIBELS Reading and Math at the elementary level. Staff reported a need for more systematic intervention and understanding and access to research-based materials. At the secondary level, the foundation of student support is through a co-teaching model and guided study hall. Staff reported that student needs are growing both behaviorally and academically. The approach to intervention with students varies by building. It is recommended that a districtwide PK-12 MTSS structure, that includes common language, data protocol, intervention resources, and targeted tiered support.

Recommendation 2: Further develop a systematic PK-12 curriculum adoption process that includes a focus on standards, implementation of evidence-based practice, professional learning, and assessment.

During the visit, staff expressed that there had been multiple adoptions throughout the last several years, including english language arts, math, and science. As part of this process, staff explained that they pilot materials, implement, and develop pacing guides and assessments. Staff expressed that they have received limited training on materials. Staff explained that they participate in an initial product training, that is often condensed in nature. It is recommended that a systematic process for professional learning be incorporated into the curriculum adoption cycle to ensure on-going support throughout implementation.

When observing in classrooms across the grade levels, inconsistent use of learning targets or objectives was used. Learning targets and objectives varied in how they were written within and across the district. The instructional tools and material being used varied greatly. It is recommended that the systematic curriculum process incorporate an emphasis on developing a common, shared knowledge of the standards.

Springfield Elementary

VI. Building Profile: Springfield Elementary School is located in the heart of Springfield, Nebraska with a preschool located inside of Springfield Platteview High School. Springfield Elementary has 729 students in Grades PK-6. Springfield Elementary has an 18% free and reduced lunch population. Springfield Elementary also has a Developmental Learning Center uniquely designed to provide direct services to students who are in need.

VII. Description of the Continuous Improvement Process:

The continuous improvement process involves all teachers in the building. Every teacher is a part of one of 4 committees which are aligned to the district's standards for success; School Culture, Curriculum, Teacher Effectiveness, and Stakeholder. The CSI committees are all led by a member of the schools Building Leadership Team(BLT). Each team is chaired by a member of the BLT. The teams meet once a month during the Monday PLC time. After each team has met, the BLT leadership meets to gather, review and analyze data. Membership on the building leadership team is on a 2 year cycle.

Each committee has objectives that tie in to the districts' standards for success. During meetings throughout the year they work towards implementing plans that help build upon the standards for success.

VIII. School Improvement Goals

As an educational community, Springfield Elementary will improve instructional practices that will positively impact students learning by:

1. Implementing and developing Social Emotional Learning within our building and community.
2. Focusing on instructional/professional growth, especially engagement & reflection
3. Becoming more systematic in our student support systems
4. Each individual student will improve in math and reading measured threwn NWEA MAP Assessment.

- Students starting in the 1st Quartile will improve by 6%tile points or more
- Students starting in the 2nd Quartile will improve by 4%tile points or more
- Students starting in the 3rd Quartile will improve by 2%tile points or more
- Students starting in the 1st Quartile will improve by 4%tile points or more

IX. Commendations:

1. The culture of the school works to grow leadership of all who are a part of it, students and staff. The ability for a group of sixth graders to be trained in leadership and lead

activities and tours around the building was exciting to see. The external review team observed students who took ownership of the building because they were allowed to take on a leadership role. The structure of the committees and building leadership team has led to a growth of teacher leaders.

2. Springfield Elementary has initiated cross grade level “houses”. A house is a group consisting of two students per grade level with one staff to lead them. These houses focus on building social and emotional needs of students as well as giving all students a staff member they can identify as an advocate. The external review team heard from teachers and students how the house structure gives them relationships they wouldn't have without it; “I have a relationship with that kid, can I try something?”. This sense of community and caring was echoed as the team heard multiple times, “These are our kids!”
3. Much like all schools in the district, the sense of community is strong. Springfield Elementary has a place in the community. Evidenced by STEAM nights, community readers, donuts with grownups and many other ways to outreach in the community.
4. The staff has a growth mindset and continues to want to learn more. The teacher effectiveness group creates quarterly newsletters with techniques that have been tried in the building and shout outs to teachers who have tried something new.

X. Recommendations for Next Steps in the Overall School Improvement Process

1. Continue to focus on learning targets. During the classroom observations the team saw minimal evidence of posted clear and concise learning targets. A focus on the importance of clearly articulated learning targets will positively impact the learning outcomes in the classroom.
2. Continue to grow with the meaningful use of instructional technology at all grade levels. During interviews with teachers and observations in the classroom the use of technology was brought up. An intentional approach to technology integration is recommended. Continue to grow the intentional use of engaging, curriculum connected technology integration.

Westmont Elementary

XI. Building Profile

Westmont Elementary School is one of two elementary schools in the Springfield Platteview School District. The school is nestled in a suburban community within Sarpy County. The school is a predominantly caucasian community that consist of 272 students in their Kindergarten through sixth grade programs. Of their population, 21 percent of students receive free and reduced lunch. Westmont’s Discovery Program serves 14 percent of their Gifted and Talented population. A Special Education, Reading Specialist, and Math Specialist provide programming to serve the unique needs of their learners. Students have the opportunity to participate in Destination Imagination, Outdoor Education, Band, and Choir to explore further interests. Westmont is incredibly proud of establishing Dens to build a strong sense of family among students. The Dens include a combination of students in Kindergarten through sixth grade that will remain together and with the same Den leader until they leave Westmont. Weekly Den meetings build upon student leadership, team building, and character skills. Dens have had an exceptional impact as one student stated, “Dens build our kindness.” Along with kindness, grit and growth mindsight has a strong presence among students and staff. Westmont is proud of the partnerships built with Werner Park and Alamo Draffhouse that promote student learning.

XII. Description of the Continuous Improvement Process: (Team membership, timelines, summary of activities, and for public schools, a description of how multicultural education is incorporated into the process.)

Westmont uses the district’s Standards for Success as their foundation for their continuous school improvement. Westmont committees include school culture, curriculum, teacher effectiveness, and parent community involvement and all building staff members are dispersed among these teams. Committees meet throughout the year for continued collaborative conversations and members are on a 2-year cycle. In each of these committees, a leader serves as a liaison between the Building and District Leadership Teams.

Westmont also has a Data team that consist of building specialist, special education, and administration. The team meets quarterly to review and analyze data in order to make instructional decisions.

XIII. School Improvement Goals

1. We will increase the percentage of students proficient on our MAP reading and math assessment by 3% from the 2019-2020 school year for each cohort.

XIV. Commendations: (Successful activities, procedures and accomplishments in the overall progress of the Continuous Improvement Process.)

1. The building has created a strong community that allows teachers and students to feel empowered, safe, and supported. Westmont has focused on the Be Kind Initiative that promotes kindness by engaging in various activities. The weekly Den meetings build a sense a family when they are able to meet with peers in different grade levels and classes. Grit activities and artifacts displayed throughout the school empower students to persevere and develop a growth mindset.
2. Westmont uses John Hattie’s effect size research to improve best practices that will increase student achievement. The staff focuses on building a safe learning environment and developing positive student-teacher relationships. There is also a focus on students taking ownership of their learning through goal setting and progress monitoring. Administration also mentioned John Hattie strategies are presented to staff through school wide professional development.

XV. Recommendations for Next Steps in the Overall School Improvement Process

Revisit writing and delivering learning targets that are standards driven and align with student learning outcomes. During the classroom observations the team saw minimal evidence of posted clear and concise learning targets. A focus on the importance of clearly articulated learning targets will positively impact the learning outcomes in the classroom.

Continue to utilize technology as an instructional tool that is intentionally implemented to support instruction. During interviews with teachers and observations in the classroom the use of technology was brought up. An intentional approach to technology integration is recommended. Continue to grow the intentional use of engaging, curriculum connected technology integration.

Platteview Central School

External Team Members: Mark Adler, Dawn Marten, Ryan Pivonka & Jason Fink

XVI. Building Profile

Building Overview: Platteview Central Junior High serves approximately 200 students, grades 7 and 8. They currently have an AQuESST rating of Excellent. Their free and reduced rate is 21%; the school does not have a reportable percentage of English Learners. The school has a teaching staff of 12, and additionally shares approximately 11 staff members with Platteview High School.

The Nebraska Framework review team met with the Platteview Central Principal, as well as with both the 7th and 8th grade teams. The review team observed 5 classrooms in 7th grade core content courses throughout the afternoon session of the school day. The review team also interviewed a student group of 8 students with questions regarding the school improvement process, successes of the school, and areas for continued growth. Throughout the visit, students and staff consistently and emphatically spoke highly of strong relationships and connectedness to the school and greater school community.

XVII. Description of the Continuous Improvement Process: (Team membership, timelines, summary of activities, and for public schools, a description of how multicultural education is incorporated into the process.)

Teachers at Platteview Central are actively participating in school improvement committees, as well as their respective grade-level teams. Teachers rotate through the various improvement committees so that each teacher learns the role and importance of every committee and how it fits into the greater school improvement goal.

XVIII. School Improvement Goals

Goal #1 - Platteview Central will focus on NWEA (MAP) scores in Reading and Math, with the following goals established based on fall 2019 testing.

- 55% of students in grades 7 and 8 will meet or exceed their RIT GROWTH GOAL from fall to spring in MAP reading
- 55% of students in grades 7 and 8 will meet or exceed their RIT GROWTH GOAL from fall to spring in MAP math

Goal #2 - Students will improve their writing, using Text Dependant Analysis skills.

- Utilize the RACE method (Restate, Answer, Cite, Explain). To measure outcome,

a rubric scoring system with a beginning of the year prompt in Social Studies and an end of the year prompt in Social Studies.

XIX. Commendations:

1. Platteview Central demonstrates strong staff collaboration and impactful use of grade-level teaming. Teams effectively monitor student progress and look at trends in data to best serve students (MAP data, classroom grades, homework completion) and identify students in need of interventions (MSAP).
2. Student orientation and acclimation program for transitioning students (6th to 7th) and an ongoing collaboration with PHS with shared staff and facilities to ensure the 8th to 9th grade transition is seamless.
3. Staff at Platteview Central are relationship-centered with a strong advisory program that incorporates a large focus on character education and development.
4. Effective use of technology (1 to 1 ipads); both within the classroom and as a tool for student organization and communication.

XX. Recommendations for Next Steps in the Overall School Improvement Process

1. **Explore curricular offerings to meet student and staff needs, maximize 1:1 technology use, and leverage the unique proximity to PHS (and its shared staff).** Throughout the interviews with students and staff, there was a strong desire for the addition of rigorous academic electives, expanded foreign language offerings, and more areas of choice at the middle school level. With the benefit of 1:1 and the ever-growing online platforms and distance learning programs, expansion to curricular offerings could be attained.
2. **A suggestion; not a recommendation.** Streamline your communication to families. Currently, the building sends a daily email from the principal as well as a weekly (or more) email from each team-leader. This is on top of any district communication. Best practices would suggest that fewer, more targeted emails would have a greater impact. Important details potentially go ignored and unread, or deleted altogether. The daily email could be a newsletter on the website that parents could elect to go to. That way, emails hold more importance when they come less frequently and are more apt to be read.

Platteview High School

External Team Members: Mark Adler, Dawn Marten, Ryan Pivonka & Jason Fink

XXI. Building Profile

Platteview High School was built in 1960 in the rural community of Springfield. The building has gone through several renovations and updates with a theater and additional gym space being added in 2001. The building continues to go through many current updates to their locker rooms, athletic fields and classrooms. Platteview currently serves 404 students and will see continued growth as the surrounding area is developed both commercially and residentially. Students qualifying for free or reduced-priced meals holds pretty steady at 19 percent. Currently, their graduation rate is 98 percent with a 97 percent attendance rate. Platteview is proud of its 80 percent participation rate in activities and athletics.

The high school's mission statement mirrors the district's Standards of Success, including culture, curriculum/academic/extracurricular, teacher effectiveness, stakeholder involvement, and leadership permeates the work they do each day in service to the students that attend. Platteview High School also boasts its dedication to dual credit classes. The supportive and positive culture of Platteview High School is created by staff committed to academic success for all students. It is without question the importance that is placed on developing positive and supportive relationships between students and staff. Staff and administration hope all students feel welcome, safe, and have a sense of belonging each day. As staff continues to cultivate quality relationships, it is hoped that success is realized in continuing excellence in all areas leading to equity among students and opportunities for success.

XXII. Description of the Continuous Improvement Process: (Team membership, timelines, summary of activities, and for public schools, a description of how multicultural education is incorporated into the process.

There is a district leadership team for each of these 5 areas, that is comprised of staff from each building. These members rotate every two years. Each building has a building leadership team that oversees the 5 teams. The district and building teams meet throughout the year to focus on the district-wide action plans and improvement goals below that support the strategic plan. Every staff member is on one of these teams. At the end of each year, the district has an Administrative Retreat where they review the goals of the district and school, report on progress, and discuss the next steps for success.

XXIII. School Improvement Goals

The Continuous Improvement Process/Model at Platteview High School is organized and led at the district level. The Model includes the following:

1. Mission & Vision
2. Strategic Plan Goals & Standard for Success
3. Data Analysis & Needs
4. School Improvement Committees & Research
5. School Improvement Plans & Best Practices
6. Professional Development & Collaboration

The continuous improvement model focuses on the following school factors:

- District/School Culture
- Curriculum/Academics/Extracurricular Programs
- Teacher Effectiveness
- Stakeholder Involvement
- Parent/Community Involvement

Improvement Goals:

1. We will provide a system of intentional interventions for struggling students to assure that the success of all students in being college and career ready.
2. We will develop a school-wide initiative of kindness that promotes acceptance of others and teaches/reinforces positive social interactions.
3. We will consistently (continuously) offer comprehensive, academic pathways to leading to college and career opportunities for all students.

2019-20 Building Goals:

1. We will focus on equipping students with future-ready skills.
2. Staff will continue to grow professionally both in knowledge and practices in serving students at all need levels.
3. We will celebrate student and staff successes daily.

XXIV. Commendations: (Successful activities, procedures and accomplishments in the overall progress of the Continuous Improvement Process.)

1. School Culture: School staff demonstrate a commitment through an established School Culture designed to reinforce relationship-building and to ensure that all students have an equitable opportunity to achieve success. A positive school culture is demonstrated both in the efforts to develop and maintain a positive climate in the building and the structure

of the building's overall School Improvement Process (SIP) as well as the personal interactions and relationship-building activities staff exhibit in their classrooms. Staff and students have a daily advisory time where they are allowed to connect and build relationships with each other. Staff used the back pocket program to identify students of need or concern. This shows the evidence of strong personal connections between staff and students, reinforcing the message of the personal value each student has.

2. Growth mindset by the administration and staff: School staff demonstrate a dedication to having a growth mindset for their own professional knowledge, as well as the academic success of their students. Platteview High School is in its eleventh year of a one-to-one technology initiative. Staff professional development has been gamified to increase integration and involvement. Within the math department, all teachers have the ability to teach dual credit classes. This represents their dedication to growing professionally and proving necessary rigor.
3. Master Scheduling: It is evident that building leadership honors common plan time and common team time. The master schedule allows for daily conversations about student academic success through the lens of data analysis in the core areas.

XXV. Recommendations for Next Steps in the Overall School Improvement Process

1. Identify and implement a district-wide academic MTSS structure that incorporates a systematic intervention program and data analysis process. Define a Tier II and Tier III structure that meets the specific needs of students that fall within each tier. Define each level by identifying the intensity of the intervention, time, duration, and frequency for each tier. Identify a time frame in which to deliver the intervention, then analyze data for the level of impact, and adjust intervention as needed. This process should be delivered, monitored and adjusted to meet the needs of your students.
2. Further develop a systematic curriculum adoption process that includes a focus on standards, implementation of evidence-based practice, professional learning, and assessment. Provide professional learning opportunities for departments to be gain a deeper understanding of their content standards and develop lessons that align these standards. Then implement a consistent approach to utilizing learning targets across all classrooms.