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### School Improvement Planning

School Improvement Planning has undergone several changes since its establishment. This year it has undergone yet another round of change but change, in this case, is change for the better. Under the old School Improvement Plan, over one hundred indicators had to be assessed before the plan could be created. Under that system, two years later schools are still just trying to assess the indicators. Since they are still in the assessment phase they are not yet able to formulate an effective plan. It would be at least another year after assessment to create the plan and still another year after that before implementation can be completed. This is a system that needs to change so we can better educate our students.

The new School Improvement Plan that has been put into place limits the indicators that need to be assessed depending on the need of individual schools. The School Improvement Planning Committee will go through Rising Star program and complete a worksheet. Once this is completed, the indicators that are most important to individual schools will be prioritized from high to low. The School Improvement Committee will then select three to six indicators that they will try to achieve for the following school year. School Improvement Committees also have research to back up their choice of indicators. The Wise Ways reading material is available to truly assess how well schools are meeting the standards. This takes assessing what is important to their school from feeling based to research based.

The change from over one hundred indicators to between three and six has greatly improved the speed at which schools will be implementing their plans.

Taft's School Improvement Committee was put together after the staff took a survey of interest. The administration took that data and assembled several different teams. This past school year, 2012-2013, the team consisted of the principal and five teachers. The teachers come from different teaching backgrounds; some may be elementary teachers, while others are junior high teachers. Having a diverse group like this is the most appropriate way for our school to team up. In a K-8 building, you must always have representation from the different levels. If the team only consisted of elementary or only junior high teachers, it would not give an accurate representation of the school as a whole.

The Taft School Improvement Plan for the 2012-2013 school year was entered through Rising Star. After talking to other students in the Education Leadership class, it has come to my attention that Taft is one step ahead as most school have not made the switch over yet. After looking through the plan, I have noted that we currently working with twenty indicators. Out of these twenty indicators, four of them are labeled as full implementation, twelve are in the plan but the objective has not yet been assigned, and three of them are currently being implemented.

After looking through all of the full implementation indicators, I agree with them. Some of these indicators had been selected as full implementation during class before even looking though the School Improvement Plan. The indicators that we are currently implementing, I know are being put into motion. I read through

the sections under “How it Will Look When Fully Met”, and at least three of those items sound familiar to things we have begun to implement into our school within the past year.

As Far as the indicators that we have in the plan but have not yet begun to put into motion, I mostly agree. I believe that they can wait a little longer as they are not the most important or beneficial to our school. There is one indicator that I believe should be put into motion already and that is “ICO8 – Staff development will be built into the schedule for support staff (e.g., aides, clerks, custodians, cooks) as well as classroom teachers”. I think this is an important indicator to implement because of the aides. I do not mind if we are not getting professional development for the clerks, custodians, and cooks at the moment but in the in classroom, aides should be undergoing the same trainings as the teachers. Professional development is in place to better provide for the students. What could be better for the students than having an aide in their classroom who also sat through the professional development, for example CRISS training, and can fully explain the reason behind what the students are doing? If the aides participate in the same professional development as the classroom teachers, it will help create a better teaching and learning environment for the student. Besides that one standard, I agree with the direction that Taft is heading with their School Improvement Planning.

Now that Taft has a School Improvement Plan in place, the real question is how can Taft quantifiably monitor that the indicators are continuously being accomplished. The Taft School Improvement Committee did a great job when indicating how it will look when fully met. The plan is very clean and easy to

monitor; either it has been done or it has not been done. The current indicators Taft has chosen to work with are pretty cut and dried. An example of the “How it Will Look When Fully Met” column: Existence of School Improvement Committee which will be the School’s Leadership Team; Completion of a survey to determine professional development needs based on collective feedback from the professional staff; and recommendations from the School Improvement Committee regarding school improvement and professional development needs. The first point in this is simply a name change. You can monitor that by merely asking if the School Improvement Committee has changed to be called the School’s Leadership Team. Regarding the completion of a survey, again either it was created and distributed or not. From working at the school I know that they have already completed that task. Recommendations from the School Improvement Committee are again black and white; either it has been done or not. I feel that it is the administration’s job to check in with whomever was assigned the different tasks to get an update on completion.

In conclusion, I believe that Taft is on the right path with their School Improvement Planning. They have a team of diverse teachers in place that meet on a regular schedule, the implementation of the improvement plan in Rising Star is ahead of other schools, the goals that Taft would like to meet this year are clear, and they have a method of monitoring the progress of the plan for now. Yes, it may get harder to monitor the indicators as they become less cut and dried but for now it is something they have a handle on. I hope that Taft continues in the direction that the

improvement plan is leading them; I feel it will have a positive impact on the education of their students.