



# Rapid City Area Schools

## District Improvement Plan 2008-2010

## Rapid City Area Schools District Improvement Plan

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# **Rapid City Area School District 51-4**

## **Rapid City, South Dakota**



### **2008-2010 District Improvement Plan Components:**

#### **Program Development**

Rapid City Area School District 51-4, located in the Black Hills, is the second largest school district in the state of South Dakota. Rapid City is the “Gateway to the Intermountain West” and is a center for commerce, culture, transportation, and education for the entire high plains. The district’s northern boundary encompasses the Black Hawk area. The eastern boundary extends to the Rapid Valley area. The southern boundary includes the Spring Creek and Hart Ranch area, and the western boundary contains the Johnson Siding Area. The economic base in Rapid City includes agriculture, forestry, government, tourism, healthcare, manufacturing, and a strong service sector. Rapid City is a community of approximately 68,000 people, with the population of Pennington County at 100,000.

After closing three schools in the past few years, twenty-three schools comprise the school district: 15 elementary schools, 5 middle schools, and 3 high schools. The district employs approximately 975 teachers, and has a total staff of approximately 1,585. Services available include pre-schools, a full-service community school at General Beadle Elementary, an alternative high school, guidance and counseling, special education, district summer school, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grants which provides after school and summer programs, and post technical education. The student population had steadily

declined in the past several years. However, in the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 school years, the population appears to have stabilized. The student population as of September 26, 2008 for the 2008-2009 school year was 13,151 students, a decrease of approximately 9 students from the previous year. This population includes 6,190 elementary students, 2,948 middle school students, and 4,013 high school students.

Rapid City School District's student profile information is indicated in the table below:

<b>Student Characteristic</b>	<b>Percentage/Data</b>
American Indian	18.45%
White	75.80 %
Asian	1.34 %
Black	1.89 %
Hispanic	2.51 %
Special Education	13.39%
Gifted & Talented	3.2%
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	.50 %
Poverty—Free and reduced lunch	34 %
Migrant	0 %
Mobility rates	8/1/08-12/1/08 RCAS received 1,588 new students, including 747 new kindergarten students (47.04%). 791 (5.8%) students have withdrawn from RCAS this year.
Discipline Data	See Attached Appendix A

The school improvement plan is developed with the input of parents, community, and staff members. The 2008-2009 RCAS District Improvement Plan Committee roster includes the following:

<b>Membership Categories</b>	<b>Name of Member</b>
Superintendent	Dr. Peter Wharton
Assistant Superintendent	Katie Bray
School Board Member	Sheryl Kirkeby
Community Member	Dennis DeSmet
Elementary Principal	Dr. Jackie Higlin
Elementary Teacher	Jackie Waldie
Elementary Literacy Coordinator	Dr. Liz Venenga
Reading Recovery Teacher Leader	Ann O'Connell
Elementary Math Coordinator	Deann Kertzman
Middle School Assistant Principal	Stan Evans
Middle School Teacher	Sherry Crofut
High School Principal	John Julius
High School Teacher	Tom Keck
Secondary Literacy Coordinator	Ann Hengen

Secondary Math Coordinator	Joel Albright
Special Education Teacher	Cher Daniel
Parent	Nancy Tindall
Parent	Mary Garry
Parent	Sherri Morgan
Parent	Lara Roetzel
Parent	Jennifer Mayforth
Parent	Gene War Bonnette
Parent	Lori Mesteth
Parent	Kris Norlin
Counselor	Randy Christensen
Director of Staff Development	Dr. Susie Roth
Director of Title VII/Indian Education	Dolores Riley
Director of Curriculum and Assessment	Dr. Jim Ghents
Director of Special Education	Troy Volesky
Director of Federal Programs/Grants	Lisa Plumb
Technical Assistance	Barb Rowenhorst, TIE, ESA 7
School Support Team Member	Dr. John Usera
School Support Team Member	Bob Rose

The RCAS District Improvement Plan Committee meets in the fall of each year for ongoing planning and development of the improvement plan. For the 2008-2009 school year, the committee met on January 27, 2009. In addition to meeting with the entire planning team, various subcommittees meet on an ongoing basis, as this is often a more appropriate planning structure. As examples, the PRIME Steering Committee, comprised of the Director and Assistant Director of the Center for the Advancement of Math and Science Education (CAMSE), an instructor from CAMSE, TIE representatives, district administrators, the math coordinators, an instructor from Black Hills State University, and technical support staff meet to plan, communicate, and problem solve. An additional example is the District Literacy Committee, which meets a minimum of four times a year. Examples of these agendas are included in Appendix B.

Furthermore, each school identified as a school in need of improvement includes parents and staff in the development of the individual school improvement plans. The school plans are shared with parents through ongoing school-level communication. Input and assistance were requested from Bob Rose, School Support Team (SST) Member during the planning and development stage for the district and school improvement plans.

The Rapid City School District has developed a mission statement and educational philosophy, as have the literacy and mathematics programs. In addition, the district administrators have developed Administrative Standards of Practice, which serve as a guide for administrators' actions. Similarly, the Board

of Education has adopted Standards of Practice, as well as Board of Education goals. The development of this internal set of beliefs regarding mission, vision, purposes, and goals provides a purpose and direction as well as a blueprint for school improvement. These documents are included in Appendix C.

As stated, the RCAS District Improvement Plan is evaluated and revised annually. Various assessments guide our program development. Timelines for review are in place and are listed on the literacy and mathematics plans in Appendixes J and K. The plans are reviewed with the entire District Improvement Plan Committee each fall, and on an ongoing basis with numerous subcommittee teams. Local assessment indicators for reading include curriculum based measurements (CBMs), Observation Survey tasks such as letter identification, word reading, concepts about print, written vocabulary and hearing and recording sounds in words, writing assessment results, DACS (Dakota Assessment of Content Standards), examining student work, and the Gates-MacGinitie Reading Assessments. Mathematics assessments include counting, hiding, grouping tens, DACS, CTB-McGraw Hill Performance Assessment (MARS-Mathematics Assessment Resource Service), and classroom curriculum assessments. These and other assessments guide our school and district instruction on an ongoing basis. A more specific description of the district's assessment indicators are specified on the Assessment Plan, located in Appendix D.

Documentation is kept of district improvement activities. This documentation includes meetings and staff development/training sessions. In addition to district-level documentation, program documentation is kept on file at the building level, including meeting agendas and outcomes, parent sign-in sheets, and a log of program development activities. A log of district-level improvement activities is included in Appendix E. Technical assistance provided by the State Education Agency (SEA), Local Education Agency (LEA), our technical support entity Technology and Innovation in Education (TIE), and SST members are also documented in this log.

On the 2007 Dakota STEP (State Test of Educational Progress), the Rapid City School District did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in both reading and math. As a result the district was in school improvement, Level 3, Corrective Action in math and at Level 1 in reading. The following identifies the grade spans, subgroups, and proficiency/advanced percentages for those areas that did not make AYP in reading:

- Grades 3-5—American Indian (68%), Economically Disadvantaged (76%), Students with Disabilities (61%);
- Grades 6-8—All Students (78%), American Indian (57%), Hispanic (67%), Economically Disadvantaged (64%), Students with Disabilities (38%), Limited English Proficiency( 50%).
- Grades 9-12—American Indian (61%), Economically Disadvantaged (52%), Students with Disabilities (34%).

The following identifies the grade spans, subgroups, and proficiency percentages for those areas that did not make AYP in math:

- Grades 3-5—Economically Disadvantaged (59%), Students with Disabilities (42%), Limited English Proficiency (33%);
- Grades 6-8—American Indian (36%), Hispanic (41%), Economically Disadvantaged (42%), Students with Disabilities (21%), Limited English Proficiency (32%);
- Grades 9-12—American Indian (34%), Economically Disadvantaged (33%), Students with Disabilities (21%).

On the 2008 Dakota STEP (State Test of Educational Progress), the Rapid City School District did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in both reading and math. As a result the district continues to be in school improvement, Level 3, Corrective Action in math; and at Level 2 in reading. The following identifies the grade spans, subgroups, and proficiency/advanced percentages for those areas not making AYP in reading:

- Grades 3-5—Economically Disadvantaged (77%), Students with Disabilities (63%).
- Grades 6-8—All Students (78%), Economically Disadvantaged (62%).
- Grades 9-12—Economically Disadvantaged (55%), Students with Disabilities (30%).

The following identifies the grade spans, subgroups, and proficiency percentages for those areas not making AYP in math:

- Grades 3-5—Black or African American (52%), American Indian (52%), Economically Disadvantaged (60%).
- Grades 6-8—American Indian (39%), Students with Disabilities (26%).
- Grades 9-12—American Indian (34%), Economically Disadvantaged (46%), Students with Disabilities (24%).

At the elementary, middle school, and high school levels, the progress with regard to proficiency levels in both reading and math for all students is displayed below:

<b>Elementary</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Reading</b>	81%	85%	85%	86%	85%
<b>Math</b>	70%	74%	72%	73%	73%
<b>Middle School</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Reading</b>	73%	80%	78%	78%	78%
<b>Math</b>	57%	61%	61%	63%	68%
<b>High School</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>
<b>Reading</b>	77%	72%	72%	69%	71%
<b>Math</b>	73%	71%	61%	67%	64%

In the 2005-2006 school year, General Beadle Elementary (Title I), was identified at Level 5 of school improvement. General Beadle made AYP on the 2007 assessment. Major components of General Beadle's plan include: (a) the restructuring of the organization of Special Education; (b) student and family services support; (c) implementation of an early childhood program; (d) an extended school day and school year; (e) a community member advisory council to oversee academic programming and overall governance of the school; (f) opportunities for collaboration, continuing education, and professional development for all teaching staff through the participation in on-site and district professional development options, as well as in local and national conferences and workshops. The restructuring plan was submitted to DOE and approved.

For the 2007-2008 school year, Horace Mann Elementary (Title I), was at Level 3 of School Improvement in reading, and made AYP on the 2007 assessment. Another Title I school, North Middle School, was at Level 5 of School Improvement. Both of these schools worked with an outside consultant, Technology and Innovation in Education (TIE) with regard to corrective action (Level 3 schools) and implementing a restructuring plan (Level 5 schools). North Middle School also received a program audit from the State Department of Education in 2007.

For the 2008-2009 school year, schools that are currently at Levels 1-3 of School Improvement are as follows: Knollwood Elementary (Title I) is at Level 2 for the area of math and Level 1 for the area of reading. Knollwood made AYP on the 2008 assessment. Robbinsdale Elementary (Title I) is at Level 3 for the area of math. Valley View Elementary (Title I) is at Level 2 for the area of math. West Middle School is at Level 3 for the area of reading. Central High School is at Level 1 for the area of reading.

Schools that are currently at Level 4 of School Improvement are as follows: Horace Mann Elementary (Title I) is at Level 4 of School Improvement for the area of reading. South Middle School is at Level 4 for the area of reading.

Schools that are currently at Level 5 of School Improvement are as follows: General Beadle Elementary (Title I), Dakota Middle School, and North Middle School (Title I) are at Level 5 of School Improvement for the areas of reading and math. South Middle School, Central High School and Jefferson Academy are at Level 5 of school improvement for the area of math.

Horace Mann Elementary, Dakota Middle School, South Middle School and the Academies received a program audit from the South Dakota Department of Education in the fall of 2008. Central High School will receive a program audit from the South Dakota DOE in the spring of 2009. Results of these audits and

plans for corrective action or restructuring are articulated in their individual school improvement plans available from the Office of Federal Programs.

The SST members, Bob Rose and Dr. John Usera led the school program audits and were consulted during the development stage of the district improvement plan. Mr. Rose and Dr. Usera were also members of the RCAS District Improvement Plan Committee. Contact with Mr. Rose and Dr. Usera has been documented in log of activities in Appendix E. Additional technical support, including contact with SEA staff, TIE consultants, ESA 7 Staff and other means of technical assistance are also documented.

The state is responsible for communicating and clarifying regulations and expectations, as well as for providing a range of technical support, including facilitating data retreats, providing School Support Team (SST) assistance, providing Educational Service Agencies (ESAs), and assisting with school improvement plans and strategies to raise student achievement. The state provides funding support for Title I schools. At the district level, support is provided in developing improvement plans and strategies to increase student achievement. Literacy, mathematics, and technology support, staff, and training are also provided by the district. Administration assists schools with various aspects of the school improvement process. The school is responsible for participating in a data analysis, developing a school improvement plan, participating in the peer review of the school improvement plan, and implementing the plan. The state, district, and school work together in a supportive and collaborative manner.

With regard to the history of the plan, the RCAS District Improvement Plan was originally developed in the 2004-2005 school year. The formal plan development was initiated when the district was placed in school improvement as a result of not meeting the AMO targets for some subgroups in mathematics. The district met AYP goals in 2005; however, the district did not meet all AYP goals in 2006. Consequently, the district advanced to Level 2 in math and was on alert in reading.

The RCAS District Improvement Plan is updated and revised each fall, with new initiatives and features of the plan included.

### **Comprehensive Needs Assessment**

A variety of needs assessments are done on an ongoing basis at both the school level and district level. At the school level, examples of these include: card sorts, parent surveys, staff needs assessments, staff surveys, Standards Implementation Indicator profile, and student surveys. In addition, formative and summative assessment data are completed and documented at the building

level. Examples of these include K-2 math performance assessments, curriculum based measurements (CBMs) of oral fluency, Observation Survey tasks such as letter identification, word reading, concepts about print, written vocabulary and hearing and recording sounds in words, writing assessment results, DACS, examining student work, Gates-MacGinitie Reading Assessments, the ACT Profile, the College Board SAT profile, results of Advanced Placement (AP) Exams, results of the CTB McGraw Hill Balanced Assessment, and the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT-10) and Dakota STEP assessments.

A public opinion survey, designed to indicate the public perception of how the district is doing has been completed. The results of the most recent survey are available at the district office. The Consolidated Survey System, completed by students in grades 4-12, includes the following surveys: The Youth Development Risky Behavior Survey, The Character Education Survey, The Healthy Practices Survey, and the Safe Schools Survey. These surveys provide feedback regarding student behaviors and perceptions and are available at the district office.

At the district level, in August 2002 the district began a process whereby achievement data are analyzed in depth. Each school develops a Building Level Team (BLT), composed of the building principal and staff members. This cadre participates in intense staff development featuring data analysis, goal setting, learning theory, team development, and research based instructional strategies. This training is facilitated by Technology and Innovations in Education (TIE), Educational Service Agency 7 (ESA 7), and by the district's staff developers. After receiving training, each BLT then facilitates data analysis and subsequent staff development in their own schools through a Collaborative Work Group structure. The BLTs are responsible for leading the Collaborative Work Groups through a process of reviewing data, setting measurable goals focused on student results, selecting instructional strategies targeted at specific standards of low student performance, and continuously assessing and refining better ways of teaching the targeted skills by examining student work. This process continues at each building on an ongoing basis throughout the year. The district provides the time for this to occur during professional development days in August, October, November, January, February, and April. A planning model, the steps of this process, and a model of the process are specified in Appendix F. At the end of the year, every staff member will be invited to complete a feedback survey. The survey guides the content and processes for subsequent training.

One specific aspect of each year's BLT process includes a data retreat each fall. This year's data retreat was held in September 2008. The data retreat process provides for each school to use an analysis of the data to set building achievement goals in reading, mathematics, and other identified sub-group areas. Each building uses the Dakota STEP results in combination with the above mentioned formative and summative assessments to set goals and to

address strategies to meet those goals. TIE and ESA 7 are involved to a large extent in assisting the Rapid City School District process, and provide the district with technical support and assistance on a contract-specific basis.

In accordance with the literature regarding the data-driven school improvement process (Schmoker, 1999, 2002) each building uses the data as well as the eMetrics (standards-based assessment report) to identify common standard areas of low performance. The diversity and varied needs of the twenty-three schools in the district also supports the process of each building identifying their own standards needing improvement based on data, rather than the targeting standards to be used district-wide. The district held a standards retreat in September to facilitate this process with all buildings.

Each school then identifies and implements strategies to address the target goals and standards. Formative assessments, such as examining student work, are used on an ongoing basis to determine students' progress. The district supports this work through professional development, including seminars, graduate classes, teacher leaders, and materials and equipment. A template for organizing and clarifying this improvement process is included in Appendix G.

At the district level, the results of the findings of the needs assessment identified the subgroups that did not meet AYP. The district met the other academic indicator (participation rate at all grade spans.) The district's attendance rate was at 92.59% in 2007. The graduation requirement was not met as indicated previously. A previous paragraph on page 4 identified the subgroups that did not make AYP in reading and math. The achievement data are presented in table format for the following subgroups: all, special education (IEP), economically disadvantaged, White, American Indian, Black, Hispanic, and Asian in Appendix H.

In the spring of 2008 a District Improvement Audit was conducted by Dr. John Usera as one of our School Support Team Members. From the results of this audit, the following corrective actions were outlined to be implemented in the 2008-2009 school year:

### *Background and Data*

On the Dakota STEP (State Test of Educational Progress), Rapid City Area Schools (RCAS) did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in both reading and math. As a result, the district is in school improvement, Level 3, Corrective Action in math; the district is in Level 2 in reading. As a result of the Level 3 status, the state Department of Education (DOE) is responsible for taking at least one corrective action for the district that responds to the academic failure that caused the State to take such action.

For the 2007-2008 school year, the year of the District Improvement audit, the following identifies the grade spans, subgroups, and proficiency percentages for those areas not making AYP in math:

- Grades 3-5—Economically Disadvantaged (59%), Students with Disabilities (42%), Limited English Proficiency (33% );
- Grades 6-8—American Indian (36%), Hispanic (41%), Economically Disadvantaged (42%), Students with Disabilities (21%), Limited English Proficiency (32%);
- Grades 9-12—American Indian (34%), Economically Disadvantaged (33%), Students with Disabilities (21%).

Because all districts in District Improvement Level 3 must receive a district audit from the SEA, the South Dakota Department of Education conducted a district audit In December of 2007. The district was rated on the following scale:  
 1 = *area of need*, 2 = *area of concern*, 3 = *meets expectation*, 4 = *exemplary*.

The table below summarizes the audit’s criteria areas and the average team score:

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Team Average Score</b>
Leadership Implications	3.4
Academic Content and Achievement Standards	<b>2.8</b>
Curriculum/Instruction	3.3
Highly Qualified Staff	<b>2.7</b>
Professional Development	3.4
Assessment and Accountability	3.2
School Culture/Climate	3.6
Budget and Resources	3.4
Parents and Community	<b>2.7</b>

These audit data indicate that the district met or exceeded the criteria element in 6 categories. The following 3 categories, highlighted above in red, indicated an area of concern that should be monitored for change: academic content and achievement standards, highly qualified staff, and parents and community. Furthermore, within the Assessment and Accountability criteria element, the audit revealed *area of concern* scores in the following sub categories: (1) Quality Assessments Aligned to State Content and Achievement Standards, and (2) Standards-Based Grading Policies and Procedures.

### Corrective Action Interventions.

With support from the DOE, *Option 2. Institute and Implement a New Curriculum* has been selected as the option to be implemented as the corrective action. The following narrative summarizes the district's intentions to satisfy the DOE intervention.

1. Conduct a curriculum audit to review the alignment of the state standards, the curriculum, the accountability system, and professional development.

The Director of Curriculum, Assessment, Instruction, and Gifted Education Services will review the alignment of the state standards, the curriculum, and professional development. This will be done by utilizing the expertise of the district math coaches and the elementary and secondary mathematics coordinators.

2. Provide appropriate professional development to staff for growth; provide an advanced program in content and methodology, and/or mentoring.

RCAS will advance the implementation of reform mathematics by providing elementary and secondary math coordinators who plan and implement professional development for district math teacher leaders; design and present district professional development opportunities and classes; and assess, select, and design curriculum materials and reporting procedures. These coordinators will meet with math teacher leaders on a weekly/regular basis to study mathematics and develop strategies to impact building-level mathematics achievement.

RCAS will work collaboratively with BHSU to offer a Masters Degree in Curriculum and Instruction leading to a mathematics specialist endorsement. At both the elementary and secondary level, a suggested plan of study regarding coursework will be developed and communicated with teachers. Through district, Title, and TCAP funds, the district will financially support mathematics teachers' participation in many of these classes. In addition, the district will support numerous professional growth experiences, such as trainings, workshops, conferences, and books studies, designed to develop teacher expertise in mathematics.

The district will be involved in Project PRIME (Promoting Reflective Inquiry in Mathematics Education), which is a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant that focuses on improving the professional capacity of math teachers. A specific PRIME plan for years 6 and 7 of the grant will be finalized.

RCAS will utilize a Building Leadership Team (BLT) process as a structure for implementing math curriculum and initiatives and building the capacities of instructional leaders to advance student achievement. During the 2008-2009

school year, these BLTs will meet a minimum of five times on an ongoing basis to analyze data and standards reports and to provide professional development regarding the areas of concern identified in the district audit. After attending these professional development sessions, each BLT will then facilitate staff development at the building level. The BLTs will be responsible for leading buildings through a process of reviewing data, setting measurable goals focused on student results, designing instructional strategies target at specific standards of low student performance, and continuously assessing and refining effective teaching strategies by examining student work. The district will provide the time for this to occur during subsequent professional development days.

RCAS will provide a New Teacher Induction and Mentoring Program designed to engage, prepare, support, and sustain the continuous development of educators whose knowledge and skills advance student learning. This 3-year system of support will provide ongoing training sessions, some of which focus on mathematics. Various mentoring opportunities will also be provided to new teachers.

These professional development programs will be funded through a combination of general fund, PRIME resources, TCAP funds, and federal Title I and IIA.

3. Review curriculum options and develop implementation procedures.

The district will formulate and distribute the position of the district regarding proficiency in an effective mathematics delivery model that utilizes research-based, best practices. Expectations and professional development will be outlined to assist in implementation.

4. Design assessment procedures for learning addressing the standards; use assessment procedures to inform instruction and respond to student needs.

The district will begin a process of using assessments and assessment results. The concepts of Assessment OF Learning (summative assessments), which focuses on how much students have learned in the past, and Assessment FOR Learning (formative assessments), which focuses on assisting our student learn more in the future, will be emphasized. This process will allow teachers to utilize formative assessments to determine students' progress and proficiency regarding standards and curriculum. These results will then be used to inform instruction. These assessment procedures will include grade levels K—12.

The results of findings of the needs assessment reveal declines in both math and reading in some subgroups, specifically American Indian, special education, and

economically disadvantaged. Strengths include relatively high levels of achievement in reading at the K-8 grade span: 86% (elementary), 78% (middle school), but a decline to 69% at the high school level. Furthermore, twelve schools met AYP goals in both reading and math, with five schools being named as distinguished schools

Challenges include the achievement gap in literacy and mathematics that exists for some populations of students as well as the low levels of proficiency for students in special education. Although minority students, particularly American Indians, have made measurable growth in academic areas, that growth is not yet sufficient.

An overall examination of the AYP data indicates that increasing literacy and mathematics achievement with all subgroups, including those meeting AYP goals, remain as priorities. Increasing the achievement of special needs students, American Indian students, and economically disadvantaged students in math and reading remain as top priorities. Additional documentation of data is on file in the Office of Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment.

## **Goals, Objectives, and Strategies**

A detailed sheet with specific goals, objectives and strategies for each subgroup can be found in Appendix H.

### Goals

At the district level, policies and practices have identified literacy and numeracy as academic priorities to ensure that all student groups become proficient by the end of the 2013-2014 school year. To meet that goal, the following AMO targets, as determined by the state, were established:

- Reading K-8: 82% of all students will score at or above a proficient level in reading as measured by the Dakota STEP Test in the spring of 2009.
- Math K-8: 72% of all students will score at or above a proficient level in math as measured by the Dakota STEP Test in the spring of 2009.
- Reading 9-12: 72% of all students will score at or above a proficient level in reading as measured by the Dakota STEP Test in the spring of 2009.
- Math 9-12: 63% of all students will score at or above a proficient level in math as measured by the Dakota STEP Test in the spring of 2009.

This same data is summarized in a table format below:

Grade Span	Reading	Math
K-8	82	72
9-12	72	63

Since the district did not meet AYP in the American Indian subgroup in math, the following goal was also established for the district in 2006:

- Native American: 45% of American Indian students will score at or above a proficient level in math as measured by the Dakota STEP Test in the spring of 2007 (safe harbor goal).

Graduation rates have been set at 80%, and the attendance rate has been set at 94%. The district met both of these goals in 2004 and 2005; however the district's attendance rate in 2006 was 92.92% and 92.59% in 2007. Additionally, in 2007 the district met the participation rate.

### Objectives

The overall goal/objective in reading for all subgroups is that students will read at increasing levels of complexity for a variety of reasons, resulting in increased achievement in reading. The overall goals/objectives in mathematics for all subgroups involve content and process standards. Process standards of communication, connection, representation, problem solving, and reasoning and proof are best assessed using the MARS. The five content standards including algebra; geometry; number and operations; data analysis and probability; and measurement are specifically assessed on the Dakota STEP and DACS assessments. Within these broad content strands, each building in the district uses data to identify common standard areas of low performance. These individual building plans, which specify objectives, subgroups, and content standards, are all available at the district level.

### Strategies

The district emphasizes using research-based approaches and strategies, and program coordinators continually utilize the educational literature. Deeming research to be SBR (scientifically based research) is a work in progress in the district. However, program coordinators read and contribute to the state's collected works of SBR. The literacy coordinator is also teaching the literacy leaders how to review educational research. This process looks at the hypothesis or research questions, methodologies, design, results, conclusions, and applications to literacy instruction. An organizer for this work is included in Appendix I.

The strategies employed in the Rapid City School District directly address the goals of improving reading and mathematics instruction and performance for all subgroups. One strategy includes the implementation of district selected curricula aligned with the South Dakota content standards. Classroom teachers,

along with support staff such as literacy and math coordinators, literacy educators, and math teacher-leaders are responsible for implementing these strategies. A more detailed literacy plan is included in Appendix J; and a more detailed math plan is included in Appendix K, which state the objectives, strategies, performance indicators, and financial support in these two content areas.

Beginning in 2006, literacy Instructional Support Teachers (IST) were added at the secondary level. Each middle school has a full time IST. The district has a 1.0 IST to serve Central and Stevens High Schools, and the Academy. These teachers, who also engage in intensive study on a weekly basis, work collaboratively with classroom teachers to implement various literacy strategies in the content area. For example, they address strategies to increase fluency and comprehension as well as strategies to support struggling readers. In addition, ISTs provide learning and professional growth opportunities for teachers.

SSS (Standards Support Specialist) staff were hired at the elementary school starting in the 2007-2008 school year to provide more reading, math, and technology support to teachers. The SSS staff are certified teachers who provide coaching, planning time, and student instruction.

In the area of mathematics, the district implemented reform curriculum, "Investigations in Number, Data, and Space" at the elementary level and "Mathscapes" at the middle school level beginning in 2003-2004.

In 2005-06, College Preparatory Mathematics (CPM) textbook series was piloted in Algebra 1 in both 8<sup>th</sup> grade and high school. This pilot expanded in 2006-07 to include most Algebra 1, half of the Geometry and four Advanced Algebra classes. CPM Algebra Connections and Geometry Connections was approved for adoption for teacher use in Algebra A/ B, Algebra 1, Geometry and Informal Geometry beginning in 2007-08. In 2007-08 some 8<sup>th</sup> grade Algebra 1 and over half of the Algebra A/B, Algebra 1, Geometry and Informal Geometry classes implemented CPM.

The district is involved in the PRIME (Promoting Reflective Inquiry in Mathematics Education) Project, which is a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant. This five-year plus, targeted Mathematics and Science Partnership grant is aimed at improving the academic achievement of all students, and also focuses on reducing the achievement gap between American Indian and non-American Indian students. The project targets the improvement of the professional capacity of all mathematics teachers in the district in a three-way partnership with Black Hills State University, Black Hills Special Services Cooperative/Technology and Innovation in Education and Rapid City Area Schools.

These groups work collaboratively to facilitate this grant which focuses on curriculum implementation, assessment, and professional development. Through grant support, the district has added math teacher leaders at the elementary level to assist teacher in becoming skilled in using an inquiry-based approach. To serve the fifteen elementary schools, twelve full time and five part time math leaders are employed by the school district. Each elementary school has from .5 FTE to 3.0 FTE math leaders. Funding for math leaders was originally supplemented by funds from the PRIME grant. Beginning with the 2007-2008 school year, RCAS has fully funded these 17 math leaders and the district elementary mathematics coordinator without the PRIME grant support. The math teacher leaders attend weekly staff development sessions, the content of which is then shared and modeled with classroom teachers.

The Building Leadership Team (BLT) process, in which intense professional development featuring data analysis, goal setting, learning theory, and research-based instructional strategies is also an integral part of improvement in mathematics. The BLTs guide their fellow staff members through trainings, held during professional development days. Classroom teachers, along with support staff such as math teacher-leaders and coordinators, are responsible for implementing these strategies.

A math coordinator and math coaches are in place at the secondary level. The secondary math coordinator supports math coaches, secondary math teachers, and the study of mathematics in grades 6-12. The math coaches work collaboratively with other teachers, such as math and special education teachers, to design and implement inquiry-based lessons. The intent is to further advance the inquiry-based mathematics model into the secondary level. However, the level of implementation is an issue, and the district recognizes that changes in teaching practices and methodology involve a process that will take time.

Several programs have been established to provide a variety of flexible learning options at the secondary level. To support the achievement of particularly American Indian students, the Oyate Center, located at the Career Learning Center, has been established. This is a credit recovery program, where students who have dropped-out of school can “drop-back in.” Another primarily American Indian intervention project is the Bush Grant initiative at Central High School, which is designed to reduce the drop out rate of at-risk American Indian students and increase the graduation rate. Four graduation coaches mentor and monitor cohort groups of American Indian students and this is an important component of the Grant. A new course is also required of all freshmen students, High School 101 which addresses those factors that most affect freshmen students for the continuing success. Additionally, three classes for sophomore students have been established as a dimension of the Academy. These smaller-sized classes provide alternative teaching practices and emphasize language arts, mathematics, and science. Finally, the South Dakota Virtual Campus provides on-line coursework for high school credit.

With regard to extended time programs, reform strategies are supported by the Discovery Center program, a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center grant, which provides after school and summer programs. Goals, objectives, strategies, and assessments of the Discovery Center are in alignment with the school in which it is located. Three elementary schools in Rapid City, General Beadle, Horace Mann and Knollwood, all of which are identified in school improvement, are involved in this program. A similar after school and summer program, "Minds in Motion," also exists at North Middle School. Extended day (full day, rather than half day) kindergarten programs are also provided in several schools. The district provides a summer school program, in which students participate in order to earn additional credits or to make up failed credit work. Students have an opportunity to earn additional credits. The Academy Career Learning Center Summer Program assists at-risk seniors to graduate from high school and transition into the work world or post-secondary education. Students also have the options of enrolling in independent, on-line study, and dual high school/college credit.

The plan to improve achievement levels in the special education subgroup involves a three part approach: Part One involves skill development. The specific strategies in this area involve effective IEP writing, collaborative teaching, and effective strategies. Part Two comprises the Building Level Process of analyzing disaggregated data for IEP students, setting goals, designing strategies targeted at standards of low performance, and assessing on an ongoing basis. Information of this process, with district goals, strategies, and assessments is specified in detail in Appendix L. Part Three involves sustained study and inquiry in the district's staff development initiatives regarding inquiry-based mathematics as well as district funding and support for these classes and training. Furthermore, beginning in the fall of 2004 the district designed a class for special educators and special education instructional assistants to study the basic elements of balanced literacy as it relates to special needs students. The district is stepping up its emphasis for teachers of special education to advance their knowledge and skills in using balanced literacy and inquiry-based mathematics approaches. The plans and strategies to address this special education subgroup are specified in more detail in the documents in Appendix L, including the Rapid City School District Improvement Plan/Progress Report Form.

The Title VII program, under the direction of Dolores Riley, specifically supports the needs of American Indian students. This program provides direct involvement with American Indian students through tutoring and additional assistance. Cultural resource specialists work with students as well as staff to provide culturally appropriate curriculum and instruction. The Title VII staff work collaboratively with classroom teachers to implement strategies for improving student performance and promoting long-term success. Title VII provides a staff member at North Middle School who has experience working with adolescents

who have behavior/drug and alcohol behaviors which affect their success in school. The ratio of American Indian students is over 50% at North.

Mrs. Riley and an identified steering committee has worked to develop a far-reaching strategic plan designed to advance the achievement of American Indian students. The steering committee will meet in January to review the goals and outcomes of the subcommittees that addressed identified needs of the American Indian students.

The plan to maintain the participation rate involves ensuring that the student data management system has correctly classified and logged all students enrolled in the correct grade level. Communication will occur among schools to ensure that all students who are required to take the state assessments participate in the testing. Additional strategies to meet the participation rate include:

- Staff will request clarification of who is counted as an eleventh grader prior to the test window.
- Staff will create a schedule and location for students who need to make up any part of the assessment.
- Staff will communicate with students and parents to enhance understanding about the importance of participating in the assessment.
- Students taking the test will be provided with breakfast/snacks to encourage student participation and quality performance.

Dakota STEP is designed to meet No Child Left Behind requirements. This summative test will measure the content standards as a criterion-referenced and a standards-based test. Student progress is monitored on an ongoing basis by these formative assessments: DACS, examining student work, Running Records, and literacy assessment notebooks. Individual student results are shared with parents by trimester or quarterly grade reports as well as parent-teacher conferences.

### **Instruction by Highly Qualified Staff**

Instruction in the Rapid City School District is provided by highly qualified teachers. In the core content subjects, 99.9% of regular education teachers are highly qualified. To promote the highly qualified status, the district assists teachers with Praxis II registration and supplies teachers with study guides and resources. Over 91% of special education teachers are highly qualified. The special education department pays for the cost of the Praxis II tests for teachers with special education assignments.

The district has filed a plan of intent with the state for each teacher that is not highly qualified. Rapid City Area Schools currently (as of 12-15-08) has eight teachers within the district who are not highly qualified. Four will be completing

their required Praxis II tests in January 2009. One teacher completed the Praxis II in November 2008, and is waiting on results. The remaining three are special education teachers. They hold a South Dakota teacher certificate, but are not endorsed to teach special education. Each is working towards a special education endorsement that entails 26 semester credits and Praxis II tests. Their endorsements will be completed in 1 to 2 years.

The school district actively strives to attract highly qualified staff through a variety of recruiting and job notification options. The district has a recruiting team that attends numerous teacher job fairs located in South Dakota, North Dakota, and Nebraska. In years past the district has also recruited in Montana, Wyoming, and Colorado. In addition to the traditional job fairs, recruiting is also done at conferences that target specific teacher areas, such as the math and science teacher conference in Huron, the special education teacher conference in Pierre, Lakota Nations Invitational in Rapid City, the Indian Education Summit in Rapid City, and the speech and hearing convention in Sioux Falls.

Teaching positions are posted on the district's web site and on various college/university websites (South Dakota, Nebraska, Montana), Associated School Board's website, TeamND.org (teaching job website for North Dakota universities). Recruiting brochures and DVDs are sent to colleges and universities such as Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas, Mount Marty College in Yankton, and Oglala Lakota College. In addition, the district utilizes a screening instrument, the Gallup Insight, to promote the selection of high quality teacher candidates.

Furthermore, the district offers a signing bonus in the amount of \$3,500 paid over a three-year period in areas of high need. In recent years, the district has increased its base salary, increased the amount of experience for which teachers may be granted credit, and provided additional benefits in order to attract and retrain highly qualified staff. Additionally, the district provides paid staff development, financial compensation to support coursework, and low-cost graduate level credit that may be applied toward a salary lane change, advanced degree, or specialized endorsement.

In addition, the district has hired a person in the Human Resources Office to review all teacher and paraprofessional files to determine highly qualified status. Every paraprofessional must meet the NCLB paraprofessional requirements prior to applying. A highly qualified paraprofessional must have 48 semester credits or more, or an Associate's Degree or higher, or they must have passed the ParaPro Assessment with a score of 461 or higher. Study guides are available in Human Resources. All paraprofessionals work under the direct supervision of a highly qualified teacher, and 100% of the district's paraprofessionals are highly qualified.

An ever-growing body of research suggests that encouraging quality teachers to stay in the profession is the real key to addressing the teacher shortage problem. Rapid City Area Schools (RCAS) takes a number of steps to retain highly qualified teachers, with a four-part approach guiding these efforts.

First, the district has established a New Teacher Induction Program, since research conducted by Smith and Ingersoll (2004) identified a significant connection between induction and the likelihood a new teacher would remain in teaching. The district's induction program has several key features. Sessions with new teachers are held on an ongoing basis four times during the school year. New teachers are provided with break-out sessions, which are designed to meet the needs of diverse learners. These two-hour sessions are offered on many topics, such as creating a positive classroom environment, managing difficult and challenging student behaviors, inquiry-based mathematics, technology, literacy development, and instructional strategies. This three-year program provides teachers with a forum for dialogue, inquiry, and reflection. The district provides resource support for the program by paying the new teachers \$20 per hour to attend the sessions.

First-year secondary teachers may also participate in the Secondary Teachers Mentor Project. These new teachers work with their building's Instructional Support Teacher (IST) during a seven-hour Boot Camp in August and receive support from the IST throughout the school year. They also attend The Engaged Classroom: Theory to Practice course and work with the IST in at least one 6-9 week collaborative teaching cycle. The district provides financial support at the rate of \$20/hour for teachers attending these sessions.

In addition, the district provides mentoring support to new teachers by offering the course, Supporting and Mentoring Teachers. This course provides group mentoring and support around the content of a book study, and is intended to serve as a springboard of discussion regarding effective teaching. An elementary and a secondary course is provided, and first and second year teachers are paid to attend. At the high school level, new teachers are matched with a one-on-one mentor and participate in a collaborative book study.

Beginning in 2006-2007, RCAS launched a New Principal Induction and Mentoring Program, since the principal plays a critical role in school improvement and the quality of a principal's leadership is a critical factor in determining whether a school moves forward to improve learning opportunities for students (Sebring & Bryk, 2000). A mentor may be assigned to principals new to the district or to the position, with mentor and new principal responsibilities being specified. The Induction Program includes the following components: district orientation and entry, ongoing meetings, guidance by administrators, attendance at workshops and conferences, Principals' Student Achievement Meetings/Classes, and monthly induction study group meetings.

Next, there is a significant relationship between teacher retention and a number

of working conditions, including opportunities for professional development where teachers can continually enhance their knowledge and skills (Hirsh, 2005). The district supports professional development primarily through the Teacher Compensation Assistance Program (TCAP) grant, Title I, and Title II A by paying teachers \$20 per hour to attend classes in literacy and mathematics. In addition, support is provided to teachers wanting to pursue National Board Certification.

Finally, a number of studies (Johnson, Berg, & Donaldson, 2005; Lee, Smith, & Croninger, 1995; Tool & Louis, 2002) reported that teacher retention is facilitated by professional learning communities, which are schools organized for productive collaboration. To advance this type of a work environment, the district engages in a Building Leadership Team (BLT) process, which strives to advance collaboration and the development of effective teams.

## **Professional Development**

### Background and Overview

The Professional Development component of the district improvement plan will begin by providing background and overview information regarding staff development opportunities in the district. Next, various content area training, including literacy, mathematics, and technology will be discussed. These areas will be followed by an explanation of professional development available to new teachers, principals/administrators including new principals, and parents. Furthermore, professional development structures will be clarified. Finally, evaluation, fiscal issues, and documentation regarding professional development will be highlighted.

Professional development in Rapid City Area Schools (RCAS) is extensive and multi-faceted. Opportunities for collaboration, continuing education, and professional development are provided through participation in building-level and district-level professional development options, as well as in local and national conferences and workshops. The National Staff Development Council's (NSDC) Standards of Staff Development have provided the Rapid City School District with a foundation for effective staff development.

The district's staff development plan is developed and coordinated collaboratively with members of the district-level Student-Achievement Team and district-level coordinators in literacy, mathematics, and technology. Additionally, the plan is reviewed by all members of the District Improvement Committee.

The plan is congruent with the district's vision and mission of providing the best possible opportunities and resources so that every child becomes mathematically and technologically competent and proficiently literate, which are also No Child Left Behind (NCLB) priorities. The district's vision and beliefs are based on a

constructivist approach to teaching and learning, which recognizes learning as the process of making sense of information and experiences. Learning constructively requires an environment in which learners work collegially and is situated in authentic activities and contexts (Vygotsky, 1978).

The staff development plan is aligned with academic priority achievement goals and objectives in reading and mathematics based upon the comprehensive needs assessment and Dakota-Step results. Additionally, staff development efforts are aligned with the components of the following school improvement process: data analysis, establishing goals and target standards, determining adult learning needs and engaging in collaborative study, designing and implementing lessons and strategies targeted at measurable student performance standards, and assessing on an ongoing basis. Staff development efforts regarding this effort focus on building common language, developing knowledge and skills, and extending each phase of the school improvement process to the classroom level. These efforts are for grades K-12, and address training all teachers including support staff, paraprofessionals, and administrators through various structures.

The district strives to organize its work within some “big idea” frameworks. Examples of these frameworks include Fullan and Zywine’s Triple “I” Model, which encourages thoughtful planning throughout three stages of initiatives and change, and Garmston and Wellman’s Nested Levels of Learning, which allows educators to reach the core elements necessary for reform and improvement.

The school district strives to function as a professional learning community and to promote a culture that supports continuous improvement and ongoing team learning. This is fostered through continuous professional dialogue and training. In addition, a sizeable portion of the Title I budget (a minimum of 18%) is allocated to support professional development.

### Literacy

District literacy programming provides a variety of one, two, and three credit classes. Examples of Literacy classes include the following: Literature Circles, Six Trait Writing/Writer’s Workshop, Content Area Comprehension, Basics of Balanced Literacy, Teaching Struggling Readers, Launching Reading Workshop, and Beyond Guided Reading. Secondary teachers have the opportunity to earn credit by studying in small study groups with their building peers. These small study groups are facilitated by each building’s secondary Instructional Support Teacher (IST).

The district works collaboratively with the University of Sioux Falls to provide a complete Master’s Degree program in Literacy. Teachers in the program complete a 33-credit program designed to develop expertise as a literacy professional and educational leader. These classes also form the foundation for

literacy programming in the district and provide an opportunity for cross-district teams of teachers to study and implement a balanced literacy program. Classroom research projects are aligned with district formative assessment work to provide continuous examination of research-based programming, standards-based reporting, and data driven instruction.

Elementary Literacy Leaders meet as a district team on a regular basis to study best practice and plan for district implementation. Literacy staff members provide instructional coaching, mentoring, facilitation of study groups, and provide leadership for district, building, and classroom assessment work.

The district provides a safety net of literacy intervention for at-risk first grade students through Reading Recovery programming. Highly trained teachers work individually with students to accelerate learning. An on-site Reading Recovery teacher-leader trains teachers and coordinates services for children.

Secondary classrooms are working at incorporating balanced literacy instruction through the framework of a classroom Workshop. A Workshop classroom is not limited to just reading and writing classes; rather, it can be defined as “a classroom where students spend most of each class ‘doing the work’ of learning: reading, writing, and talking about important content that will empower them to participate in, lead, and transform society.”

Through the Instructional Support Teachers, the middle school and high school staffs are studying, collaborating, dialoguing, and implementing recently researched practices for empowering students in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The secondary focus for 2008-2009 follows the district initiative: formative assessment.

Secondary Literacy Programs include (1) Teacher Learning Circles, small study groups of teachers within a building who are studying an educational topic that matches their quest for educational learning and expertise, (2) Secondary Mentor Project for new teachers, further explained in this document, (3) Secondary Literacy Leaders Partnership, where content area teachers host and observe learning labs throughout the district, work on secondary projects such as the Secondary Literacy Notebook, study together, and share best practices, and (4) Secondary Instructional Support Teachers who work with all teachers to address state standards, provide “in-situation” coaching in classrooms with teachers and students, and offer a variety of large- and small-group professional development opportunities for teachers.

### Mathematics

In mathematics, the district is committed to continuing the services and professional support developed during the district’s heavy involvement in Project PRIME (Promoting Reflective Inquiry in Mathematics Education), which was a

National Science Foundation (NSF) grant. This five-year plus, targeted Mathematics and Science Partnership, was aimed at improving the academic achievement of all students in the Rapid City Area Schools. The project focused on improving the professional capacity of all mathematics teachers through 100 hours of training for district math teachers. Math leaders in each school offer teachers embedded professional training in addition to the classes offered by the math department. The professional development focuses on mathematics content, effective pedagogy, and analysis of data for instructional improvement. Professional development targets state and national content standards in math as articulated in the district's curriculum guide. The goals, objectives, and delivery structure of the PRIME Project continues to provide district data collection and analysis services.

The Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction (MSCI) Math Specialist program began in 2005 as a collaborative project involving the Center for the Advancement of Math and Science Education (CAMSE), Black Hills State University (BHSU), and RCAS and continues to offer a master's degree involving math instruction at all levels. This focused plan of study meets the South Dakota requirements for designation as a Math Specialist. MSCI candidates are required to complete 14 credits of core masters classes and 18 credits of math content, pedagogy, and leadership credits, as well as an action research project. Core classes are offered on campus in Rapid City or on-line through BHSU. The first cohort completed this degree and specialist certification in August of 2008. In addition, numerous teachers can be awarded the Math Specialist title to supplement an existing master's degree in education.

Numerous mathematics classes are also offered through Rapid City's staff development course offerings each semester. These math classes are facilitated by teachers from RCAS, CAMSE, and BHSU. Examples of mathematics classes include the following: Teaching with CPM: A Balanced Approach to Inquiry-based High School Mathematics Instruction, Foundations and Issues of Mathematics Education, Understanding Student Thinking in Number and Operations, Understanding Student thinking in Algebra, Dynamic Classroom Assessment, Relearning to Teach Arithmetic, and Understanding Student thinking in Geometry and Measurement.

### Technology

The use of technology is embedded in staff development opportunities. To meet the needs of integrating technology, the district provides opportunities for professional growth through workshops, classes, and a train-the-trainer model that enhance the District's K-12 curriculum and instructional practices. Workshops and classes are offered to develop skills to make learning and instruction more engaging, effective, and efficient for students. These staff development opportunities support district initiatives in all academic areas and promote the growth of professional learning communities through the use of

technology. Furthermore, Technology Leaders from each building attend monthly trainings and through a train-the-trainer model, provide learning opportunities at the building and individual level. These trainings allow educators to make use of software and electronic tools to support learning and make their work more efficient. Teacher Compensation Assistance Program (TCAP) funds support the Technology Leaders additional training.

### New Teachers

Rapid City Area Schools has a New Teacher Induction and Mentoring 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.

The New Teacher Induction Program has several key features. Prior to the start of the year, a First Days of School session is held to help new teachers successfully launch the new year. Additionally, sessions are held on an ongoing basis during the school year. New teachers are provided with break out sessions, which are designed to meet the needs of diverse learners. Sessions are offered on many topics, such as creating a positive classroom environment, managing difficult and challenging student behaviors, inquiry-based mathematics, technology, literacy development, and instructional strategies. This three-year program provides teachers with a forum for dialogue, inquiry, and reflection. The district provides resource support for the program by paying the new teachers to attend the sessions.

With regard to the district's mentoring support, the course Supporting and Mentoring Teachers is targeted toward those staff in their first or second year of employment. The course provides group mentoring and support around the content of a book study, and is intended to serve as a springboard of discussion regarding effective teaching. An elementary and a secondary course is provided, and first and second year teachers are paid to attend. In addition, many schools provide building-level induction and mentoring support for new teachers. Examples of this type of support include providing new teachers with additional learning experiences and matching new teachers with a building-level mentor.

Participation in the Secondary Teachers' Mentor Project is provided to many new secondary teachers. Upon acceptance of this opportunity, new teachers in each of the high schools and middle schools agree to (1) attend a seven-hour Boot Camp in August, (2) participate in a six- to nine-week collaborative cycle with the building's Instructional Support Teacher (IST), and (3) attend the course, The Engaged Classroom: Theory to Practice. During the Boot Camp, the ISTs assist

teachers in gaining background knowledge regarding building protocols, procedures, routines, setting up classrooms, and planning the first week. As the school year begins, the IST in each building becomes the “go-to” person for questions, frustrations, celebrations, and advice. Also, the ISTs and the new teachers engage in regular dialogue, reflection, and inquiry about classroom management, teaching, and learning. A major focus of the Engaged Classroom: Theory to Practice course is to become familiar with Rapid City Area Schools’ foundational principles of effective instruction and classroom application.

Furthermore, at the high school level, a mentor/mentee program focuses on new teachers being assisted by veteran teachers in the following areas: implementing curriculum, using research-based instructional strategies, planning for efficient parent communication, and establishing and maintaining classroom management. This program provides teachers new to the high schools to receive the support, advice, and direction necessary to make their first year’s experience as successful and meaningful as possible. Part of this program involves a book study, and the involved teachers are able to earn a credit for participation. Both mentors and mentees are compensated for their additional time through TCAP funds.

### Principals/Administrators

Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to students’ learning (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). The quality of a principals’ leadership is a critical factor in determining whether a school moves forward to improve learning opportunities for students (Sebring & Bryk, 2000). Dr. Susie Roth, Director of Staff Development, as well as other members of the district’s Student Achievement Team, provide monthly student achievement meetings for principals at which time key initiatives in the district are addressed and training is provided to improve instructional leadership. In past years, these meetings have addressed such areas as literacy, effective math instruction, data analysis, teacher evaluation, and testing strategies. Beginning in the 2007-2008 school year, there was a focused approach to assist building administrators in developing and implementing effective school improvement plans. In 2008-2009 work with building principals has focused on alignment of school improvement components, and on moving school improvement efforts to the classroom level by defining clearly goals, objectives and strategies as well as formative assessment measures. Administrators are able to earn doctoral-level continuing education credits through these trainings.

The importance of the principal’s position combined with the shortage of qualified applicants require attention to supporting new principals in order to enhance their performance and increase the likelihood that they will want to remain in their positions. To accomplish this, the district has developed a New Principal Induction and Mentoring Program. Principals, assistant principals, and deans

have the opportunity to attend this three-year program. Key components of the induction program include the following: entry orientation, guidance and meetings with district administrators, project-based development, and monthly induction study group meetings.

In addition, members of the administration have numerous occasions to attend professional development opportunities. Examples of these staff development experiences include Lenses on Learning, The Pike Group training regarding facilitation of effective group processes, the Crucial Conversations Seminar, the Curriculum Mapping Institute, The National Conference for Elementary and Secondary School Principals Conferences, the National Middle School Conference, the National Staff Development Council Conference, and the Northern Interior Staff Development Council Conference.

### Parents

Parents are also provided opportunities for training. The schools provide content area trainings, which allow parents to support academic goals. Examples of this include Partners-in-Print and Family Math nights. These sessions train parents regarding strategies that can be done in the home to support efforts in reading and math. Other opportunities for parent training are also provided, such as sessions on parenting, school success, gang awareness, and discipline. Furthermore, the district supports parent attendance at state PTA Conferences and at National Title I Conferences.

The Title I schools have established partnerships with the South Dakota Parent Resource Network. This organization has developed a research-based framework of six types of involvement (Epstein & Salinas, 2004), which are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. These six types of involvement are utilized to develop a comprehensive program of partnerships with parents and the community. A more specific explanation of this partnership and parent involvement process is included in the Parent Involvement and Education component of this plan.

Each year a district-wide event is held that provides parent training through the annual Parent Academy. Parents are able to work with staff to attend a variety of sessions with topics pertinent to parents of teenagers. The high schools offer parent sessions which focus on assisting families in planning for college admissions, scholarships, and financial aid. Juniors and seniors also attend Post-High Planning, a yearly event where they and their families can get first hand information about financial aid, admission requirements, scholarships, programs of study, student services, cost, and other information about the participating schools.

## Structures for Professional Development

As previously discussed, beginning with the 2002-2003 school year, the Rapid City School District began extensive staff development designed to assist schools in learning how to effectively examine assessment results and design improvement plans and strategies through the BLT process, a major structure for district-level professional development. Through the BLTs, each school team participates in this sustained, intensive, staff development process that features data analysis, standards analysis, goal setting, collaborative study, research-based instructional strategies (researched and studied through the district's literacy and math departments), and ongoing assessment in an aligned format. After receiving training, each BLT then facilitates staff development at the building level.

The district provides the time for this building-level work to occur during professional development days on an ongoing basis throughout the school year. Typically, school improvement work is conducted in the morning, and in the afternoon staff have time for self-selected implementation of professional development. These BLT trainings are aligned with the National Staff Development Standards and prepare staff for new levels of accountability required by the No Child Left Behind legislation. All documentation of the BLT work is kept in the Office of Staff Development.

Other structures are also in place to promote teachers' professional growth. These professional growth experiences include study groups, where teachers engage in studies of current research and professional literature, particularly in literacy and mathematics education; and special sessions, which provide opportunities for grade level colleagues to network.

Furthermore, the district recognizes that if teachers are to become more instructionally effective at the classroom level, quality teachers must provide training to educators regarding best practices. This is best achieved through the demonstration of such practices in an authentic situation (McKinsey & Company, 2007). Therefore, a number of staff members provide focused one-on-one classroom coaching. Additionally, these Instructional Support Teachers, Literacy Leaders, and Math Teacher-Leaders attend weekly training sessions, and Secondary Math Coaches attend biweekly training sessions. These leaders then provide workshops, demonstration teaching, collaborative dialogue and reflection, and peer coaching to the teachers with whom they work at the building level. Math leaders/coaches also facilitate collaborative study groups and work closely with building administration in focusing improvement efforts.

Title VII staff provide access to cross-cultural materials and strategies for improvement of Native American student performance. Title VII Cultural Resource Specialists are available to work with teachers to help Lakota students

succeed by providing Lakota cultural understanding, awareness, resource materials, and presentations related to Lakota students in the classroom. These staff provide training and collaborative teaching for teachers and instructional assistants in areas such as culturally appropriate curriculum, awareness of Native American learning styles, and integration of tribal history in the form of song and story telling. The Title VII program is one way the district strives to reduce the achievement gap.

Several schools in the district have redesigned the workday to provide for the resource of time to promote significant improvements in teaching and learning. The traditional school schedule has been restructured to make more professional development time available. Time for collaboration and professional development often takes place on Wednesday afternoons. Where this occurs, the school day is extended on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays; and ends earlier on Wednesdays.

At the building level, many structures are in place that support professional development. Examples of these learning structures include whole-faculty study groups, book studies, and action research projects.

### Evaluation of Effectiveness

In addition to analyzing the impact on student achievement through data processes, evaluations of professional development are analyzed in a variety of ways. Every course is required to have the instructor conduct a course assessment. Surveys are conducted following sessions, such as those for BLT training and induction sessions for both new principals and teachers. A district-wide evaluation is conducted regarding goal progress at the end of each year as well.

### Fiscal Issues

The district provides financial support for professional development through the general fund, Title funds, and TCAP resources. Much more than the required 10% of the district's Title I Part A allocation is set aside for professional development purposes. The district pays teachers, at the rate of \$20/hour, to take up to two literacy and math 2- and 3-credit classes. Other courses, in areas such as technology and induction classes also provide financial support. Instructors are paid at the rate of \$1,000 per credit to teach courses for the district. Records for these stipends and out-of-contract time are maintained on Additional Pay Sheets and school board meeting records.

### Documentation/Evidence

Various forms of evidence, including coursework attendance, conference expenses, stipends and additional pay, and workshop/course sign-in sheets are

maintained at the district offices on the third floor. Furthermore, documentation of various forms of professional development, such as agendas, handouts, and course syllabi are maintained at the Office of Staff Development.

### Conclusion

In summary, Rapid City Area Schools provides educators with a wealth of quality professional development experiences. The district recognizes that the pathway to improve student outcomes is through the improvement of instruction. Learning occurs when students and teachers interact, and thus, improving learning implies improving the quality of that interaction. The district is committed to the belief that continuous learning by educators is essential to improving the achievement of all students.

## **Parent Involvement and Education**

Increased parent involvement is an ongoing goal for the Rapid City School District. A Parent Involvement Policy and a Parent Compact have been developed and are included in Appendix N. At an annual meeting, typically held each September, parents are given a copy of the involvement policy and the compact. These two items are reviewed annually with parents, and are included in the schools' handbooks. Feedback and input is also sought from parents at this annual meeting. Parent signatures demonstrating attendance at this meeting (as well as other parent sessions held throughout the year) are kept on file at the school level.

At the district level, parents are involved in ongoing school improvement efforts through the Key Communicators. This is a group, comprised of parents from each school in the district, who meet with the superintendent and other district administrators on a monthly basis, to collaborate and problem solve issues. Parents also provide input through the district Grant Committee as well as Instructional Council, and are involved in NCA (North Central Accreditation) to give feedback and perspective to the review committee.

The district places a high priority on improving the internal and external communication within the district and the community to increase public support for the Rapid City School District. A district Communication Plan has been developed to meet this goal. This plan represents a prioritized list of specific action steps, target audiences, objectives, key messages, people responsible, time frames, required resources, evidence of success, and notes. The development of this plan indicates the value and emphasis the district places on parent and community members' opinions, input, support, and partnerships. This Communication Plan is included in Appendix S.

Under the direction of Dolores Riley, Director, the Title VII Indian Education PAC (Parent Advisory Committee) meets monthly to address the specific needs of American Indian students and their parents. Parents are encouraged to provide guidance in educational as well as cultural areas. Participation in these parent meetings has increased substantially in recent years. The Board of Education participation on this committee has also increased from one to three members. In addition, the Bush Grant initiative at Central High School provides an opportunity for parents of students in this program to gather at the school each quarter for an informal time of food, fellowship, and a review of student progress

Parents have an opportunity to be involved in planning and evaluation, and provide feedback each year by completing a survey. Parent-Teacher Conferences are held in the fall and the spring and a Back to School Night is held each September. Parents are invited to participate in trainings. Examples of these trainings include the following:

- Love & Logic parenting sessions—where parents learn how to deal with discipline issues
- Partners in Print—where parents learn about strategies that can be done in the home to support literacy efforts. These sessions are designed for parents of both primary and intermediate level students.
- Read Across America Night—where the entire school celebrates the joy of reading and learning
- School Safety sessions—where parents programs and strategies are offered so that children learn to withstand negative societal pressures. Topics include Conflict Resolution Strategies, Gang Awareness/Resistance Training, and involvement with S.A.V.E. Rapid City groups.
- Kindergarten Open House—where parents become acquainted with the teachers and the kindergarten program.
- Family Math and Math Information Nights, which happen at every elementary building at least once a year.
- The Artist-in-Residence parent session—where parents learn how to assist and support their children with the writing process.
- Special sessions with parents—Examples of these include training sessions on students' learning styles, Family Math Night, and Homework Help Nights.
- Computer classes for parents.
- Drug and alcohol awareness and prevention.
- Supporting homework habits and study skills.
- College admissions, scholarships, and financial aid.
- Student events in which parents are included—Examples of this include a science fair, a literacy fair, a Buffalo feed, Honors assemblies.
- Family Sessions hosted by the PTA, such as a Bingo Night and a 50's Dance.

As previously discussed, many schools have established partnerships with the South Dakota Parent Information Resource Center. This organization has developed a research-based framework of six types of involvement (Epstein & Salinas, 2004), which are parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community. These six types of involvement are utilized to develop a comprehensive program of partnerships with parents and the community. The SD Parent Information Resource Network actively works to assist schools with this process.

Beginning in 2006, A Family Leadership Institute, which strives to mobilize parents as a critical resource in the school improvement process and increased student achievement was initiated at the Title I schools. A Family Leadership Team, composed of 5-7 parents/grandparents working in partnership with the principal and school staff, attends a two-day Family Leadership Institute. This team develops a parent involvement plan based on school improvement goals and recruits additional parents to assist with implementation of the plan and ongoing evaluation data. Information and documentation regarding the Family Leadership Institute is included in Appendix N.

In 2008, The Parent Information Resource Center met with all Title I building principals to coordinate efforts to work on welcoming, honoring and connecting with families. A pilot for the program, Solid Foundation, is taking place at Horace Mann Elementary for the 08-09 school year to support these efforts.

The district communicates with parents through letters, newsletters, KILI radio on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, the RCAS web site, the Parent Access component of the district database where parents can access attendance and grades, and building level weekly Tuesday folders. Parents receive mid-quarter reports as well as quarterly report cards and now the elementary schools are using standards based report cards that are distributed on a trimester basis. A parent guide to the report card is distributed to all families. Parents are involved in the referral of their child to the TAT (Teacher Assistance Team) and/or RTI (Response to Intervention team) and Reading Recovery and Math Recovery processes. When necessary, district staff (counselors, Family Support Specialists, and Title VII staff) will make home visits to assist parents in different aspects of the educational program. When parents receive assessment results, support and assistance is offered in interpreting results by letters of explanation to parents and by contacting school offices.

The district works collaboratively with the community. A volunteer program is in place, which includes: Big Brothers Big Sisters, Retired Senior Volunteers, and Junior Achievement. The district also works collaboratively with agencies such as Youth and Family Services, Girls Incorporated, The Club for Boys, Headstart, Rural American Initiatives Ateyapi Program, Rapid City Character Counts Coalition, Chiesman Center's Civic Education Program, and the John T.

Vucurevich Foundation. Each school has a business partner with the member of the community who serves in a supportive and advisory capacity.

In late August or early September of each school year (August 22nd in 2008) parents are advised about the schools' identification for school improvement and informed about public school choice and/or supplemental service options. These letters of school improvement at various levels of school improvement are presented in Appendix O. In addition, in December 2004, Secretary Melmer informed parents about the district's identification for Level I improvement in math, and explained the meaning of that designation. The district also advised parents about this status, along with the district's strategies to address the issue and meet target goals in mathematics. A copy of these district level improvement status letters is included in Appendix P. On October 31, 2005, a communiqué from Diane Lowery, State Title I Director, indicated that the parent notification in 2005 was sent in the year of identification (see Appendix O).

A district improvement audit was performed from December 10-13 of 2007 to identify the areas of strength and weaknesses in nine domains. A team of seven educators and professionals representing the South Dakota Department of Education, School Support team, Black Hills State University College of Education, ESA 7, and an outside consultant on special populations provided a complete report to the district and community.

## **Transition**

Young children experience a milestone transition when they approach the age of five and enter the public school system. Parents and schools need to communicate and coordinate efforts in order to prepare children to function successfully in the school setting.

Plans are in place to assist preschool children to transition from early childhood programs into kindergarten. 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 qualifying children. Children with high needs are placed in a developmental preschool. There is one communication preschool classroom assisting three to five year-olds in speech and language. Rapid City Area Schools offers a Community Preschool Program open to all students three to five years of age. These programs are located in five elementary schools throughout the district.

Some Rapid City schools provide an extended day kindergarten program for qualifying children (those most in need of a full day program). Students are assessed regularly so that those students who have mastered the skills exit the program and new students needing additional support enter the program.

Head Start students visit kindergarten classrooms each spring. Small group sessions are held for kindergarten students during the first week of school. Private preschools are also invited to visit kindergarten classrooms. A kindergarten open house may be held before school starts to assist with the transition process. Kindergarten parents are targeted to attend parenting classes. Kindergarten screening is done in the spring, with coordination and communication with Kibben Kuster School.

Students who exit from Special Education receive transition support from the building level Intervention Strategist. In addition, special education students transitioning from one level to another (elementary level to middle school level; middle school level to high school level) attend a spring IEP at the receiving school. The student and the parents have the opportunity to meet teachers, administrators, and to tour the building. Special education staff receive training to support transitioning. Examples of this include a presentation about the Enderle-Severson Transition Rating Scale (a transition assessment tool) and the Transitions Outcomes Project Training. Post high school special education transitions are addressed through the IEP process. Included in these IEP discussions are the opportunities for job shadowing, visits from outside agencies, experience based career exploration, vocational opportunities, and independent living.

Each spring, administrators from the district's middle schools assist with transitioning of fifth grade students from elementary school to middle school. Registration is conducted at this time and student questions are answered. The fifth graders may also take a field trip to the middle school, so that they have a better understanding of the school setting and what to expect as middle school students. All five middle schools have moved the traditional fall open house to the week prior to school starting to familiarize parents and students with teachers and schedules.

With regard to transitioning from middle school to high school, each January, the high schools send a comprehensive mailing to middle school parents and students regarding scheduling and transition into high school. Teams of administrators and counselors visit each feeder middle school to work with students on the process of moving from middle school to high school. Middle school students and their parents are invited to attend an evening orientation/course selection session at the high schools. On the day before the first day of school, administration and guidance host an additional orientation session for ninth graders and their parents. Each September, guidance counselors assist ninth graders with high school transition by discussing topics such as drug/alcohol prevention and awareness, homework habits, information about transcripts, and study skills. Furthermore, at Stevens High School, at-risk ninth graders may be enrolled in the Tender Loving Care (TLC) core. This core has been specifically put together to address the needs of at-risk ninth graders by providing smaller class sizes, a variety of pedagogical styles, and assignment

to the Academic Resource Center for additional assistance. To keep the transition process intact for these students, counselors and teachers make specific recommendations for appropriate placement in 10<sup>th</sup> grade classes.

The high schools provide transition to post secondary education through several venues. The Guidance Departments in conjunction with the University of South Dakota offer an evening session for parents and students focusing on assisting families in planning for college admissions, scholarships, financial aid, etc. Juniors and seniors attend Post-High Planning, a yearly event represented by over fifty post-secondary schools where students get first-hand information about financial aid, admission requirements, scholarships, programs of study, student services, cost, and other information about participating schools. In the months of September and October, guidance counselors complete transcript checks and then visit individual classrooms to work with students on planning their coursework with their post-secondary goals in mind. Finally, all freshmen are required to take the South Dakota Career Assessment Program Aptitude Test. Counselors assist students in folding these results into the Choices program additional career exploration.

Transition to the 9<sup>th</sup> Grade Academy at Lincoln begins with the middle school staff making recommendations of students who would benefit from the Academy program. Parents may also recommend their children to the Academy. As often as possible, an individual conference is held with each student wishing to attend the Lincoln Academy to make sure the program is the best placement for the needs of the student. To further assist in this transition to high school, a series of workshops and activities are held during the first week of school to emphasize the Academy's expectations.

Transitioning into the world of work and post secondary education is an ongoing process at the Career Learning Center (CLC) Academy. Beginning with the student/parent interview, the coordinator identifies what the student's plans are after graduation. Appropriate classes are planned to assist the student in that career direction. Students who have no plans are encouraged to take the Career Decisions course. Once a student is enrolled at the CLC Academy, they participate in an all-day orientation, most of which is devoted to learning the steps of career selection, doing interest and aptitude testing, and learning to use a variety of websites that can assist with college planning and financing. Through the Learn and Serve Program and Partnership Rapid City, students are made aware of the opportunity to do job shadowing as a way of finalizing or exploring career plans.

In addition, all students are encouraged to attend Fall Career Planning Days, the Health Fair, visits to Western Dakota Junior and Senior Days, in addition to taking the ASVAB (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery). Throughout the school year, the coordinator meets with students to discuss the results of the career activities and discusses the post-secondary ideas they have developed.

Senior exit interviews review the students' plans and include the offer to be of further assistance after graduation. Development of the CLC website provides financial aid information, ACT testing, career exploration links, and other information that parents and students have requested in regard to post high school and transition.

Some transition support exists for students new to the district. For example, middle school Instructional Support Teachers (ISTs) work vertically with high school IST's to help students transition into high school. In addition, in 2006-2007 teachers from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools in the Masters Program from the University of Sioux Falls worked with RCAS staff. Having BIA staff in the Masters Program allows for communication between staff on the reservation schools and district staff. Further transition for those students new to the district remains a goal area that warrants further consideration and staffing support.

Plans are also in place to transition secondary students from outside treatment facilities/incarceration back to the mainstream high school. The Western South Dakota Juvenile Service Center (WSDJSC) supports students transitioning back to public education in cooperation with the school districts. Each student's home school is expected to designate a person to act as liaison between the school and WSDJSC. This person assists in securing books and course work from the home school while the student is at the WSDJSC. After release to the home school, this liaison assists with the student's transition back into the home school environment. This designee can act as a liaison between the student and classroom teachers who may not always understand the difficulties students face when returning to the mainstream.

Additionally, outreach programs have been created to address student needs as they transition back from a correctional facility, treatment facility or another out of district placement. The Rushmore Academy works with youth who are assigned to the Department of Corrections and unable to attend their regular high school for any number of reasons. This program helps them to earn high school credit while waiting to enter one of the district's high schools or other alternative programs. Students work one on one with certified staff to earn credits toward high school graduation, learn appropriate job skills and personal finance and living skills.

## **Monitoring and Support**

Students experiencing difficulty receive effective and timely assistance by a referral to a Teacher Assistance Team (TAT), Student-Teacher Assistance Team (STAT), or Response to Intervention (RTI) when academic or behavioral concerns arise. The assessments used to determine progress for individual students include the following: curriculum based measurements (CBMs) of oral

fluency, Observation Survey Tasks which include assessments on letter identification, concepts about print, and text reading level, writing assessment results, DACS and Achievement Series assessments, ongoing examination of student work, Gates-MacGinitie Reading Assessments, counting assessments, hiding assessments, and the grouping by 10s assessment.

After the referral, the Intervention Strategist, a teacher specifically hired at each school to meet the needs of at-risk students, conducts a classroom observation and sets up a team meeting, which includes a child's parents. The results of individual student data is presented and shared with all members of the team at this time. Teachers and specialists (such as a social worker, counselor, and/or behavior strategist) serve as team members. The team suggests strategies and interventions to assist with a child's success. The team may recommend a meeting with the pre-referral team to determine if formal testing is needed. The Multi-Disciplinary Assessment Team (MDAT) reviews the results of the testing to determine eligible services.

Services are available for the most at-risk kindergarten students through Extended Day Kindergarten programs, which is available in some Title I schools. In addition, first grade students whose literacy development is most at-risk receive additional support in the form of the Reading Recovery program. First grade students are selected for Reading Recovery based on the results of the Observation Survey Tasks. The lowest scoring students are placed in Reading Recovery. With both Reading Recovery and Extended Day Kindergarten students, a new student is selected to enter the program as students exit the program. These students continue to be monitored in first and second grades to ensure continued strategic reading.

Students at elementary schools receive more instructional time by utilizing the literacy staff as "buddy teachers." By adding a second teacher during the literacy time, two certified, trained teachers are working with students during guided reading.

In addition, three Title I elementary schools have Math Recovery for first grade students. Training has also been provided this year to at least one special education teacher in each elementary building and one middle school, in the Add+Vantage program which utilizes Math Recovery strategies and assessments to assist teachers in diagnosing a student's current understanding of math concepts in order to provide appropriate interventions and modifications.

Support and communication with parents in the form of meetings, Tuesday folders, conferences, the district web site, and teacher contacts are done on an ongoing basis. Parents are invited and encouraged to attend all S/TAT meetings.

At the secondary level, an Academic Resource Center (ARC) is available as a drop-in service or may be placed on a student's daily schedule. The ARC provides support and tutorial assistance to students. A certified teacher and several paraprofessionals are available for individual and small group instruction. Teachers are typically available before and after school to provide individual assistance to students in need.

Students enrolled in AP (Advanced Placement) math classes at Central High School and Stevens High School are offered an opportunity to voluntarily work with students at the five middle schools and throughout the Rapid City Academy. These students are scheduled during math class hours as well as after school hours to support students as they study mathematics. In addition, AP students volunteer in the ARC at Stevens High School during the school day.

The district's Literacy and Mathematics Improvement Plans are revised annually to reflect the analysis of assessment data and input from annual surveys of parents and staff. The individual student assessment portfolios and the Dakota STEP Test results guide our planning for academic development.

### **Fiscal Requirement**

Funds are used to support this district plan with regard to staff salaries and benefits, professional development, and supplies and equipment. Title I funds used to support the plan are listed and described on the budgetary attachment, Appendix Q. At least 18% of the district's Title I budget is used to support professional development, including classes, conferences, workshops, district-level staff developers, and contracted services in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics for all sub groups, including special education students.

Title I, Title IIA, and district funds are the primary funding sources for literacy and mathematics staff development. Funding sources are coordinated through the Offices of Student Achievement, Staff Development, Indian Education, and Federal Programs/Grants and are targeted towards improvement of instruction in literacy and math. District personnel or individual schools may apply for funds through a grant application process. The district grant committee and District Leadership Team determine approval of the grant application through alignment with the comprehensive needs assessment priority areas. Schools or individuals are advised of the grant committee decision by the Federal Programs/Grants office.

Title I schools are provided with a per pupil financial allotment. Each school utilizes those resources in the areas of staffing, supplies, equipment, and professional development to meet the school's needs and goals.

The set-aside funds will be used to explore methodologies to increase achievement in reading and mathematics, which has been described in more detail in the Professional Development component of this plan. The district's site-based management approach with regard to funding, time, personnel, and materials will be continued, based upon past successes.

The district has 20% of its Title I Part A allocation available to provide public school choice via related transportation, and Supplemental Education Services (SES). However, 20% has not historically been required for choice and SES. In 2004-2005 (16) families requested transportation from the Title I School Improvement schools at a cost of \$6,500. In 2005-2006, (10) families requested transportation from the Title I School Improvement schools at a cost of \$6,500, and the parents of (4) students requested SES at a cost of \$2,500. In 2006-2007 the parents of (7) students requested SES at a cost of \$1,200 and (5) requested school choice at a cost of \$2,295.12. In 2007-2008 families of (8) students requested transportation from the Title I School Improvement schools at a cost of \$2,200, and the parents of (12) students requested SES at a cost of \$2,740.

For the 2008-2009 school year (6) families have requested transportation from the Title I School Improvement Schools and there are (81) students who have been registered for Supplemental Education Services (SES). Currently \$150,000 has been allocated for School Choice and SES.

An amount equal to the 20% can be provided through a combination of the following sources: Title I; Title II A; School Improvement; 21st Century Community Learning Grants; and the School District General funds.

Needed resources requested of the district are documented on purchase orders and blue claims. The district's response to requested needed resources are considered through the lenses of alignment with the district's identified needs and of philosophical stance in the areas of balanced literacy and inquiry-based mathematics. The appropriate central office personnel's signature indicates the request was granted. These documents are available upon request. Allocation of funding, staff, and other resources is enabling Rapid City schools and the district to make progress in meeting goals.

## **Ongoing Program Development**

This two-year plan is evaluated each fall, after receiving the Dakota STEP assessment data, and revised based on current data. A district school improvement planning meeting is held each year.

The LEA approves the building plans in December following the schools' school improvement meeting/peer review, and monitors implementation on an ongoing basis. Following approval of the school plans, the School Improvement Coordinator meets with each school principal. Strengths of the plan, items for future consideration, and items needing revision are discussed. An example of a

feedback letter and communication regarding plan discussion is included in Appendix R. Monitoring of the building plans is also done through the BLT process and through ongoing meetings with principals. Examples of ongoing monitoring are documented in Appendix T.

A Peer Review of individual school improvement plans is conducted annually. For the 2008-2009 school year, it was conducted on November 21, 2008. A specific emphasis was placed on the cohesive design of the Goals, Objectives and Strategies component with every building principal articulating to peers information specific to literacy and mathematics.

The District Improvement Plan was reviewed by the District Improvement Plan Committee on January 27, 2009. The plan then went to the RCAS School Board of Education for approval on February 5, 2009, along with all individual school improvement plans.

Monitoring the implementation of the district plan is done through regularly scheduled meetings with district administrators and by monitoring building level implementation initiatives.

Major components of both the building and district plans are communicated with parents via letters/newsletters as well as through various district and building-level committees. Periodic reviews and revisions are included with the district's documentation log.

This document contains only the narrative portion of the District Improvement Plan. Copies of this narrative can be found in every school within RCAS, as well as each of the central offices located at the City School Administration Center. To view the appendices, obtain additional information, or to provide input, please contact: The Office of Federal Programs/Grants at (605) 394-6892.