

Journey To Excellence

S.J.S.D. Continuous School Improvement Plan

2007-2012

Superintendent's Statement

The Journey to Excellence

The St. Joseph School District's *Journey to Excellence* continues. The hallmarks of an effective long-range plan are that it is evolving, comprehensive, dedicated in purpose, and committed to principles, while being flexible enough to adapt and respond as needed. The District's *Journey to Excellence* meets that description.

The Journey to Excellence moves forward with a set of measurable goals designed to outline the direction of the St. Joseph School District and responds to the criteria required by the Missouri School Improvement Planning cycle. As such, the *Journey* serves as the Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP).

Our plan's strength is that it was built on a foundation of community participation. In 2006-2007, a revision process encompassing eight months of focus groups and web-based responses provided a framework of revision of Goals and Core Values.

Goals include:

- 1) Develop and enhance quality educational and instructional programs to improve performance and enable students to meet their personal, academic, and career goals by addressing needs of the whole child.
- 2) Recruit, develop, and retain a quality staff to carry out the SJSD mission and goals.
- 3) Provide a safe, secure learning environment.
- 4) Practice fiscal stewardship of resources.

Core Values include:

- 1) A Commitment to Excellence
- 2) Integrity of Actions
- 3) Culture of Collaboration

At its core, the *Journey* hinges on District Goals, which were adopted by the SJSD Board of Education in June 2007 and which are vital, relevant, and responsive to our community. The 2009-2010 *Journey* includes School Improvement Plans and Professional Development Plans from each elementary, middle, and high school as well as the Colgan Alternative Resource Center and Hillyard Technical Center.

The 2009-2010 *Journey* is a transition year to a five-year Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP) that will be a guide until 2012. Each year, however, the District and each building will revise the CSIP based on data for a given year, making it a living document. Although the goals will not change, strategies and action steps

School Improvement Plans

Annually, each school leadership team (teacher leaders and administrators) analyzes student data and develops a uniquely-tooled School Improvement Plan (SIP) that addresses specific objectives, strategies, and action plans for increasing student achievement. Michael Fullan, a renowned educational researcher, suggested, “In the business of teaching and school improvement, intellectual capital – ideas, fresh solutions, and effective teaching methods – is the most precious commodity.” SJSD school improvement plans are replete with intellectual capital and are grounded in best practices.

The 2009-2010 *Journey* contains recently revised District and Board goals, strategies, action steps, and core values as well as a summary of plans developed by each school. Although most of the District’s schools have governance and collaborative processes supported by the Accelerated School and Learning Community philosophies, each school is autonomous in determining its governance process; however, each school must provide for and follow a governance process. Two high schools (Lafayette and Benton) are A+ designated schools and Central High School is pursuing International Baccalaureate (IB) designation. The Technology Department coordinates with the Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Department to provide resources that support student learning throughout the District. We are confident that the decentralization of the planning process has resulted in enhanced quality of the plan itself and reflects efforts throughout the District that will achieve the vision, mission, and goals set forth by the Board of Education.

Professional Development Plans

The SJSD Professional Development Plan focuses on the following strategies for the District: 1) To provide needed resources in the form of time, or its budgetary equivalent, to support effective professional development throughout the District; 2) To identify an instructional focus for the SJSD and provide district-level in-services to support its implementation; 3) The authority to determine the nature of the school’s learning environment should be relocated so that those closer to the students make more decisions that shape learning. A District Professional Development Committee, elected by and from among the teaching faculty, provides governance for budgeting, allocation, and implementation. An evaluation/survey based on the National Staff Development Council’s standards for quality professional development will provide input for future planning. Currently, 90% of teachers feel they are receiving quality staff development.

Professional development impacts student achievement. To support the SIP, building leadership teams, along with the Professional Development Committee (PDC), have outlined learning opportunities for teachers. These professional development plans are detailed, reflecting how PD supports goals, strategies, and actions steps in the SIP. Thomas Guskey wrote, “What is required for success in professional development is a clear and compelling vision of the improvements needed, combined with explicit ideas on the organizational characteristics and attributes necessary for success. If changes at the individual level are not encouraged and supported at the organizational level, even the most promising innovation will fail.” Development of professional development plans also reflects a decentralized process and promotes professional learning that complements each school improvement plan (SIP).

Value-Added

Based on Thomas Guskey’s work *Evaluating Professional Development*, the SJSD has committed to evaluating professional development activities beyond Levels 1 and 2 in which participants just evaluate a specific in-service. We believe in and practice a commitment to Levels 3, 4, and 5 that provide for evaluation of professional development related to allocation of resources and impact on student achievement. Each school’s SIP and PD plan strategies are evaluated based on full implementation of

strategies learned during professional development the impact the strategies have on student achievement in a given year.

- Level 1 Evaluation of PD – Reaction of Participants
- Level 2 Evaluation of PD – Participants’ Learning
- Level 3 Evaluation of PD – Organizational Support and Change
- Level 4 Evaluation – Participants’ Use of New Knowledge and Skills
- Level 5 Evaluation of Pd -- Student Learning Outcomes

Budget Process and Long-Range Planning

The budget of the St. Joseph School District outlines how the funds available to the District are distributed among the various departments and schools to accomplish goals set forth in the CSIP. The District uses funds to provide necessary programs, services, and support to operate our schools. Departments use funds to support goals developed in the Departmental Improvement Plans. Schools use funds to support instruction and services closely connected to operational needs related to the learning environment.

The St. Joseph School District’s budget, therefore, is a vital part of the *Journey to Excellence* – the District’s CSIP. An annual examination of the budget reveals how the District plans for the future and uses funds to support long-range planning and school improvement plans, departmental improvement plans, and technology improvement plans.

Summary

The term journey implies movement – action. It is our purpose to continually move toward the goals of this plan and achieve our mission of *educating each child for success*. As such, the *Journey* will assist the Board of Education, the leadership team, faculty, staff, parents, and students in the St. Joseph School District’s vision to be *A Great Place to Learn*.

Continuing the Journey...

Dr. Melody A. Smith