



STATE OF IOWA

THOMAS J. VILSACK, GOVERNOR
SALLY J. PEDERSON, LT. GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
JUDY A. JEFFREY, DIRECTOR

June 16, 2006

Dave Schmidt, Superintendent
Washington Community School District
404 West Main Street
Washington, Iowa 52353

Dear Superintendent Schmidt,

The visiting team extends appreciation to the administration, staff, students, and community members for their time and cooperation during the comprehensive site visit. School District welcomed the team with gracious courtesy and hospitality.

The site visit was designed to review the educational practices in the district. The purposes of the site visit are described in 281-IAC 12.8(4)(a)(2). They are as follows:

- to assess progress with the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan,
- to provide a general assessment of educational practices,
- to make recommendations to assist the district in improving educational practices, and
- to determine that a school or school district is in compliance with the accreditation standards.

The site visit report is attached to this mailing. It is our hope that this report will provide guidance to enhance student achievement in your school or school district. As schools and school districts build a continuing conversation with staff and local community about what students are learning, at what levels students are learning, and how *more* students can learn at higher levels, increased student achievement should result.

The following report is based upon interviews conducted and documents reviewed on February 14-15. The team members that conducted the review are listed below.

The Site Visitation Team:

Department of Education Representatives

Debbie Boring	Consultant, School Improvement
Dale Gruis	Consultant, Bureau of Community Colleges
Jim Fliehler	Consultant, Bureau of Community Colleges
Diane Moore	Consultant, Bureau of Children, Family, and Community Services

Area Education Agency Representatives

Brad Colton	Consultant, School Improvement
John Nietupski	Resource Development Specialist
Sally Sinclair	Consultant, Retired

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Helping Communities Meet the Learning Needs of All Their Children and Adults

School Representatives

Shirley Pantini	Retired
Terry Rhinehart	Curriculum Director, Williamsburg CSD
Amy Shala	At-Risk Coordinator, Mid Prairie CSD

In addition to the strengths and suggested areas of improvement, this report may describe Areas of Noncompliance. If Areas of Noncompliance are identified, the school or district administration must return a completed Noncompliance Plan of Correction or evidence that corrections have been completed to the team leader within 45 business days. Within this plan of correction, please include the actions the school or district intends to take and the time needed to complete those actions (see final pages of this report).

All schools/districts must also review their current Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP) and revise according to district priorities. The directions for revision and submission of the CSIP can be found at <http://www.state.ia.us/educate/ecese/asis/csi/csipsys.html> . The deadline for recertification is September 15, 2006

The visiting team once again extends gratitude for your courtesy during the visit. The team encourages you to nurture success for all students and continue efforts to increase student achievement at all levels. It is our hope you will provide us with feedback on the site visit process. The feedback form is available at the following site <http://tp2.aea11.k12.ia.us/004/leasvsd.tp4>. In an effort to continuously improve the school/school district comprehensive site visit process and content, please click on the link to complete the survey. It will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your responses are confidential and shared only in aggregate form to members of the DE School Improvement Team. Your opinions are valued.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,



Debbie Boring
Division of Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education
Iowa Department of Education



Del Hoover
Deputy Division Administrator
Division of Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education
Iowa Department of Education

cc: Team Members
School Board President
Iowa Department of Education Official File
AEA Office

Comprehensive Site Visit Iowa Department of Education



Washington Community School District

Team Findings February 14-16, 2006

Iowa Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
Des Moines, IA 50319-0146

The following findings are based upon *interviews conducted* and *documents reviewed* on February 14-16, 2006.

Notes:

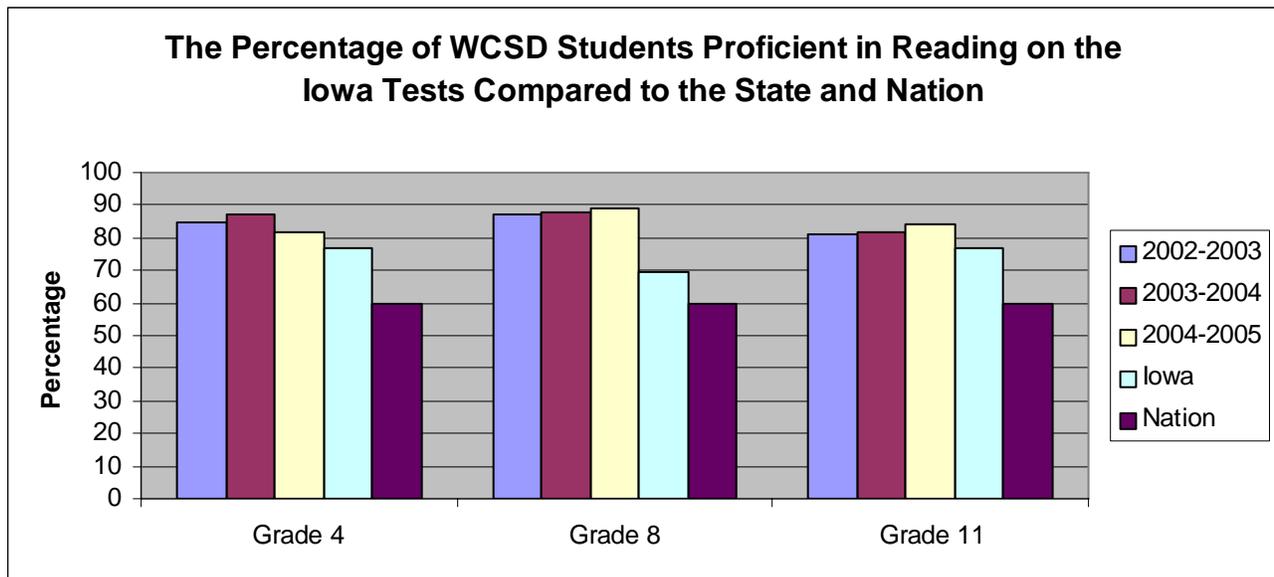
Suggested Areas of Improvement are considerations only. The intent is that the recommendations in this report provide a variety of options for a school/district to consider in its pursuit of continuous school improvement.

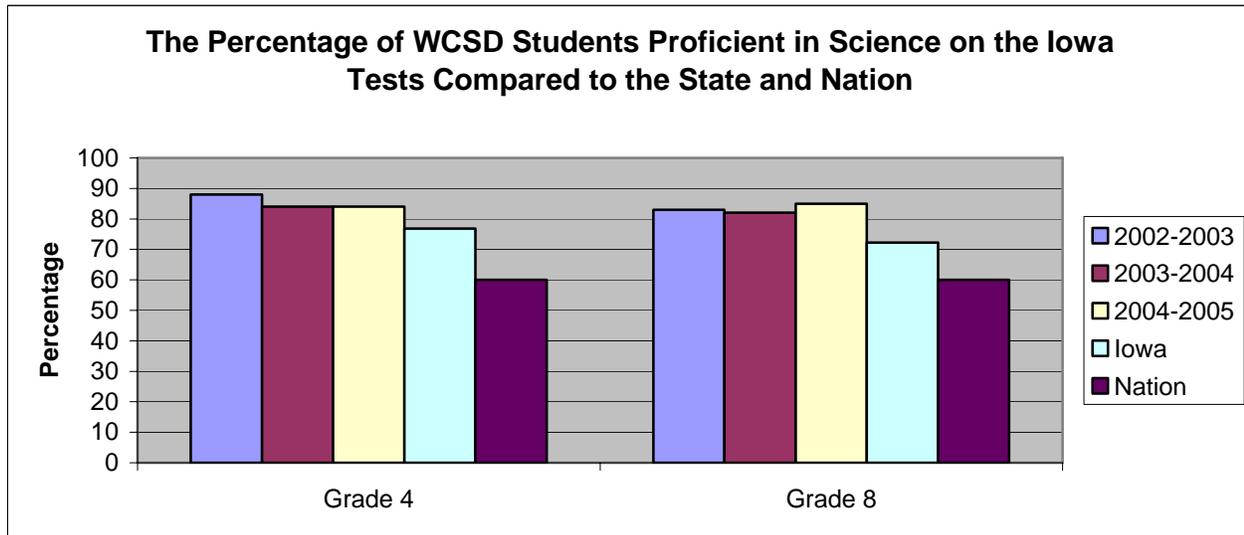
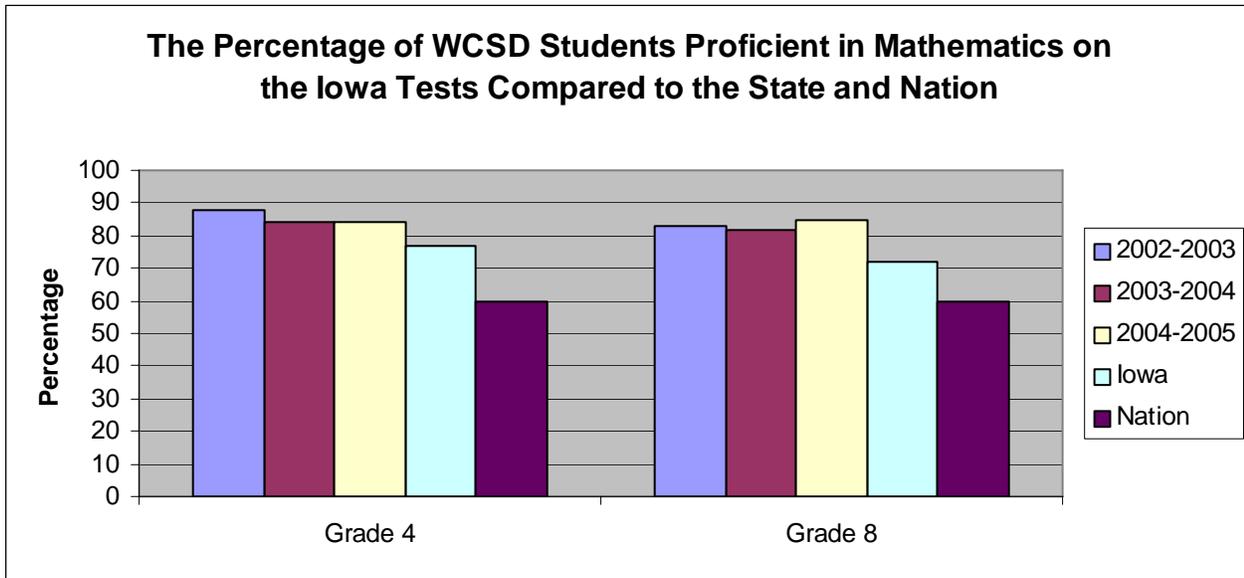
Constant Conversation #1
What do data tell us about student learning needs?

- ***Academic and non-academic data collected by the school/school district***
- ***Use of academic and non-academic data analysis to determine prioritized needs/goals***
- ***Use of academic and non-academic data to determine professional development target(s)***
- ***Actions developed based on prioritized academic and non-academic need/goals***

Areas of Strength

1. Students in the Washington Community School District (WCSD) have consistently scored above the state and nation in the areas of reading (grades 4, 8, and 11), mathematics (grades 4 and 8), and science (grade 8) on the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED) over the past few years.





2. The district collects a variety of data, both academic and non-academic. Examples include the following:
- Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS)/Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED)
 - Drop out data
 - Graduation data
 - Graduate Surveys (at graduation, one year after graduation, and five years after graduation)
 - Career and Technical Education (CTE) data
 - Iowa Youth Survey
 - Community Needs Assessment
 - District-developed reading, mathematics, and science test data
 - Demographic data

- Discipline data
 - Reading Recovery data
 - Title I data
 - Olweus (bullying/harassment program) data
 - Body Mass Index data
 - ELL data
 - Cognitive Abilities Test data
 - Curriculum-Based Measures (CBMs)
 - Cultural Assessment Survey data
3. The district's graduation rate for 2003-2004 (always reported one year in arrears) was 95.6 %, compared to a state average of 89.8 %.
 4. The percentage of WCSD students scoring 20 or above on the American College Test (ACT) (a measure of probable post-secondary success) in 2004-05 was 75%, compared to a state average of 69.9%.
 5. The percentage of WCSD students considered as drop outs in grades 7-12 during the 2004-05 school year was .37%, compared to a state average of 1.58%.

Suggested Areas of Improvement

6. Though the district collects and analyzes data regarding district programs, courses, and activities, several courses at the high school appear to be segregated in terms of gender or race. The district is encouraged to monitor the enrollment of students in district programs, courses, and activities to ensure balance (see Equity Report).

Constant Conversation #2
What do / will we do to meet the student learning needs?

- ***The influence of leadership on the school improvement process***
- ***Determination of action plans, implementation of action plans, and non academic goals***
- ***Actions to reduce academic achievement gaps***
- ***Actions to eliminate barriers to learning***
- ***How the District Career Development Plan is determined and implemented***
- ***The selection process of research-based strategies for implementation through professional development aligned with academic and non-academic goals***

Areas of Strength

7. Most groups interviewed indicated that the district's administrative leadership is dedicated, dynamic, and innovative. Teachers reported that administrators encourage them to try new ideas in the classroom. Teachers also reported that administrators encourage them to challenge themselves and to "think outside the box."
8. Members of the district's Board of Education described their involvement on various committees in the district and community. Board members interviewed were articulate and knowledgeable regarding student achievement and district programs. Board members interviewed also noted their support for teachers, administrators, and support staff.
9. The district meets the needs of students in grades 9-12 through the Assure Center, an alternative high school program. Students are allowed to participate in individualized subjects, computerized curriculum, or teacher led classes. The Assure Center operates in partnership with Kirkwood Community College. This program was begun 9 years ago with the support of a grant. Even though funding from the grant no longer exists, the district has continued to fund the program. Administrators interviewed indicated that individual, as well as teacher-led instruction is utilized to meet the needs of students. Casas testing is also used as pre- and post-measures of student learning. The center currently enrolls 23 students and has two certified staff, one support staff, and one part-time social worker. At the junior high school level, the Bridges program provides an alternative setting for students in need of an alternative educational approach in order to be successful.
10. Numerous steps have been taken to eliminate barriers for learning and address disparities in the proficiency levels of various subgroups. Examples include the following:
 - High school buddies at the elementary
 - Use of the computer lab and two portable labs to reinforce mathematics skills (Stewart Elementary)
 - Reading Specialists (Stewart and Lincoln Elementary)
 - Reading Recovery (Stewart Elementary)
 - Instructional Decision-Making (IDM) model
 - ACCT (Lincoln Elementary)
 - Crisis Prevention Instructors (CPI)
 - Mathematics Specialist (Lincoln Elementary)

- Bridges program (Junior High)
- Homework help after school (Lincoln Elementary and Junior High)
- Strategic reading and mathematics instruction (Junior High)
- Honors Mathematics (Junior High)
- Drop out and substance abuse prevention programs (High School)
- Post-Secondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) (High School)
- Social Workers
- Alternative High School (ASSURE Center)
- Bi-Lingual outreach person, plus the addition of a teacher for English Language Learners (ELL)
- 30 Para Educators (18 of whom are certified)

11. The district has demonstrated its commitment to providing services for students identified as ELL. The district allocates supplemental funding for ELL services. One bilingual outreach staff member serves students and families in the district. Additionally, the district has allocated funds for two additional ELL teachers for the 2006-07 school year.

12. The district utilizes several criteria for identifying students for participation in its Extended Learning Program (ELP). Nomination and screening procedures are well defined.

13. Community members are involved in the support of students in a variety of ways, including the following:

- Stewart Elementary
 - Circle of Support (support for disaster relief)
 - Scholastic Book Fair
 - Community volunteers for academic support
- Lincoln Elementary
 - Interns from the University of Iowa
- Washington Junior High School
 - Builders Club
- Washington High School
 - Parent Council
- District-wide
 - Community Partners such as the “Y” and local Kiwanis Club

14. Students in the upper grades have a variety of opportunities to participate in co-curricular activities, including the following:

- Lincoln Elementary
 - Lego League
 - Sunrise Singers
 - Honor Band and Chorus
 - Beginning and Advanced Band
- Washington Junior High School
 - Builders Club (sponsored by the local Kiwanis Club)
 - Jel/Tatu (student-led anti-tobacco group)
- Washington High School
 - A variety of student clubs

- ❑ Numerous athletic opportunities

15. The district utilizes a variety of resources to meet the needs of children and families within the community through its At-Risk Program. The district has established a Wellness Fund in conjunction with other groups within the community, including faith-based groups, providers of physical and mental health care, and service organizations. Student groups also participate in fund raising activities to support this program and to increase student ownership. Students' and families' needs are assessed to identify the types of services that are needed. Assistance is provided when needed, including such supports as medicine, healthcare, clothing, food, electricity, transportation, and counseling. A "Host Family" model is also utilized to ensure that students are partnered with families agreeing to provide temporary housing when needed. The district employs two full-time social workers and a full-time Family Liaison that work to coordinate these efforts. Additionally, school nurses serve students in both elementary buildings, and one school nurse is shared between the junior high and senior high school.

16. Numerous groups interviewed indicated appreciation for the district's communication via e-mail, district newsletters, building newsletters, and some individual teacher newsletters. Communication among students, teachers, administrators, and parents was described as strong. To the extent possible, district publications are available in other languages. Parents and students interviewed indicated appreciation for easy access to information regarding student progress. The district's staff were described by many as approachable and accessible.

17. The district utilizes a number of teams at the building and district level to plan for the provision of student support. Each group meets on a regular basis. Examples of teams include the following:

- District Level
 - ❑ Board of Education
 - ❑ District Advisory Team
 - ❑ Administrative Team
- High School
 - ❑ Student Assistance Team
 - ❑ Block Teams (weekly follow-up to professional development/building concerns)
 - ❑ Communication Team
 - ❑ Parent Advisory Team
- Junior High School
 - ❑ Student Assistance Teams
 - ❑ Grade Level Teams (student assistance, cross-curricular)
 - ❑ Content Teams (curriculum and instruction)
 - ❑ Child Study Team
 - ❑ Olweus Committee (bullying and harassment)
- Lincoln Elementary
 - ❑ Child Study Team
 - ❑ Grade Level Teams
 - ❑ Content Teams
 - ❑ Student Incentive Committee
 - ❑ Olweus Committee

- Faculty Study Group
- Stewart Elementary
 - Child Study Team
 - Grade Level Teams
 - Reading Team
 - Olweus Committee

18. Numerous interviewees indicated that WCSD staff (administrators, teachers, and support personnel) are caring, committed, personable, and responsive to student needs. Interviewees also indicated staff are available before and after school to help students and they demonstrate interest in students on a personal level. Most groups interviewed described mutual respect between students and staff.
19. The district has created an environment of inquiry by focusing on the use of data to make decisions in a variety of areas. The use of Data-Driven Leadership (DDL) strategies has encouraged staff to make various decisions regarding student needs based upon those data, including the formation of supplemental and intensive groups.
20. The visiting team commends the district for its use of student achievement data to determine a focus for professional development. All teachers and administrators were able to articulate the building focus for professional development and cite the reason for this focus based on student data. Several groups interviewed were able to articulate the way in which administrative walk-throughs and implementation logs are used to monitor the use of strategies by individual teachers.
21. Several Groups interviewed indicated that the district continues to focus on ways to improve student achievement through high expectations for students. At the high school, the district plans to offer Advanced Placement (AP) Calculus during the 2006-07 school year. The district has increased its mathematics graduation requirements from 2 to 3 units. Additionally, a senior level mathematics class has been added to address the mathematics needs of students who do not choose to take higher-level mathematics. These decisions were based upon feedback from recent parent/teacher/student surveys. Mathematics teachers and administrators interviewed indicated that “openers,” open-ended problems based upon student needs identified through analysis of mathematics assessments, are used at the beginning of mathematics classes at the high school.
22. The district’s special education teachers were described as “dynamic” and willing to take courses/training when necessary to learn how to meet the specific needs of individual students. Several interviewees noted that students are served in the general education classroom as much as possible and that students are taught to be their own advocates. Several success stories were shared by interviewees, including exiting students from special education due to meeting the goals of their Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Additionally, several interviewees indicated special education teachers and general education teachers work collaboratively, serving students with and without IEPs.
23. The Instructional Decision-Making (IDM) model is being implemented at Lincoln Elementary School (grades 4-6). Teachers were able to describe the way in which

supplemental and intensive groups are working to meet the needs of students. These groups were described as “flexible.”

24. Teachers and administrators have participated in such research-based professional development as differentiated instruction, bullying prevention (Olweus), and explicit reading instruction. Teacher evaluations are aligned with both the Iowa Teaching Standards and the district’s goals.
25. The district has taken a number of steps to increase safety of students by ensuring that most doors are locked during the day, with limited access for outsiders. At the elementary buildings, procedures have been developed to address student safety during dismissal.
26. The district’s K-12 guidance and counseling program was noted as a strength by several interview groups. Several innovative programs have been implemented, including Best Buddies, Latino Outreach Program, Olweus, the Lincoln Leadership Team, and Peer Helpers.

Suggested Areas of Improvement

27. Multiple interview groups noted concerns regarding the district’s facilities. Though some facility needs have recently been addressed, numerous issues of architectural barriers were found in most of the district’s buildings, including parking access, gravel parking lots, absence of elevators, and uneven floors. The district is encouraged to complete a self-evaluation of accessibility among its various buildings and develop a plan to address any identified facility needs (see Equity report).
28. In some buildings, general education teachers are reportedly developing increased ownership for the achievement of students with disabilities. Many of the district’s general education and special education teachers work collaboratively to ensure that all students have access to the core curriculum with appropriate support. The district is encouraged to continue to work with all general education and special education staff to ensure that all students in the district are served in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE).
29. The district is working to implement Instructional Decision-Making (IDM) in all buildings, including the utilization of supplemental and intensive groups. A variety of interviewees indicated that the implementation of IDM has been more successful in some buildings than others. The district is encouraged to continue to work with teachers district-wide to strengthen the integrity of this program and to increase its impact on meeting students’ needs.
30. The district utilizes a variety of data to make instructional decisions; however, at the classroom level, few teachers were able to relate the way in which data are used to impact classroom instruction. The district is encouraged to provide teachers access to the Grant Wood On-line Assessment System to strengthen their ability to utilize data for instructional decisions at the classroom level. Grant Wood Area Education Agency (GWAEA) could assist the district in this process. GWAEA would also be able to provide an IEP Results Summary Report that reviews progress on goals for students with disabilities by individual teacher, building, or district that can assist with instructional decisions.

31. The district has developed its District Career Development Plan, and teachers have developed Individual Career Development Plans; however, some teachers interviewed had difficulty articulating how their individual plans align with either the district or building plans. The district is encouraged to continue to work with teachers to ensure alignment between individual professional development goals and district/building goals.
32. Elementary parents and teachers interviewed (Stewart Elementary) indicated a desire to become more involved in decision-making at that site. Interviewees reported having little input into several significant decisions. Parents and teachers noted the possibility of an advisory committee both to help with the decision-making process and to educate the public regarding decisions made at that site. Such a committee may also help the perceived lack of communication among administrators, parents, and teachers.
33. Some parents of high school students interviewed indicated a desire to learn more about Advanced Placement (AP), Post-Secondary Enrollment Option (PSEO) courses, and dual credit classes at the high school. The district is encouraged to review its procedures for informing parents about these types of opportunities at the high school.
34. The district's Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP) contains information regarding the integration of Multi-Cultural/Gender Fair (MCGF); however, few teachers were able to articulate the connection between their curriculum and the infusion of MCGF. The district is encouraged to continue to educate teachers in ways to incorporate MCGF into the district's curriculum.
35. The district communicates with parents, students, and community members for whom English is a second language in a variety of ways. On the playground, posters describing activity options are in Spanish and English. The district is encouraged to continue to explore additional ways to communicate with non-English speakers. For instance, bully-proofing posters, fire drill instructions, and tornado instructions throughout district buildings are in English only.

Constant Conversation #3
How do / will we know that student learning has changed?

- *The process for gathering and analyzing academic and non-academic data to determine progress on school/school district academic and non-academic goals*
- *The process for implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the effectiveness of strategies aligned with academic and non-academic goals learned through professional development*
- *The integration of the Iowa Teaching Standards into the teacher evaluation process*

Areas of Strength

36. The district has allocated a minimum of twenty hours of common professional development for all instructional staff during its designated professional development days. Additionally, twenty hours are allocated to time for planning and demonstration/observation. Teachers are involved in planning/directing professional development. Additionally, internal experts are utilized to support professional development. Through the professional development process, teachers develop professional portfolios including information regarding the implementation of new learning.
37. The district has made a number of program/procedural decisions in response to data. Examples include the following:
- Scheduling changes at Lincoln to allow teachers to participate in IDM
 - Continuation of block scheduling at the high school after a formal study was conducted
 - The addition of a Senior level mathematics course
 - Procedural changes on the playground at the elementary
 - Implementation of programs such as Bridges and the Assure Center
 - Increased support for the district's Latino populations

Suggested Areas of Improvement

38. The district utilizes a variety of data to inform instructional decisions. Data are also used to set priorities and goals. Teachers are demonstrating their use of strategies learned through professional development. Implementations logs and administrative walk-throughs provide evidence of their use. Evaluating the effectiveness of new strategies learned causes challenges for all school districts. Continual training in the analysis of formative, classroom data may provide the district's teachers and administrators greater insight into the effectiveness of such strategies to impact increased student achievement. GWAEA would be able to provide assistance in this area.

Constant Conversation #4
How will we evaluate our programs and services to ensure student learning?

- ***The steps in the decision-making model used by the district to determine the following:***
 - ***the rationale/need to create a program***
 - ***the rationale/need to continue a program***
 - ***the rationale to make program modifications***
 - ***the rationale to discontinue a program***
- ***Examples of decisions the district has made based on data resulting from program and service evaluation***
- ***The lessons learned from the evaluation of programs and services and the impact on the district's evaluation cycle***
- ***Allocation of Resources***

Areas of Strength

39. In recent years, the district has done extensive program evaluation in various areas. A "Site Visit Model" was used to evaluate the effectiveness of block scheduling at the junior high and senior high schools. This model could serve as a format for program evaluation in any number of other program areas.
40. The district has been creative in accessing and allocating a variety of resources to support students with diverse learning needs, including students identified as at-risk and English Language Learners. A variety of grants have been accessed for the purpose of supporting students and their families.

Suggested Areas of Improvement

None noted.

**Component # 5
Other Areas**

- *Board policy manual review*
- *Personnel and student records*
- *Licensure and certification*
- *School calendar and hours of instruction*
- *Other state and federal requirements*
- *Other factors not addressed in Constant Conversation Questions 1-4*

Areas of Strength

None noted.

Suggested Areas of Improvement

None noted.

Public School District’s Special Education Self-Assessment Compliance Status

The district is currently implementing its special education corrective action plan. The timeline for implementing and completing the plan is May 5, 2006.

Public School District’s Compliance Status in other Federal Programs:

Public School District’s Title IIA (Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund) Compliance Status

The school district has no citations of Title IIA non-compliance identified during this visit.

Public School District’s Title IID (Enhancing Education Through Technology, E2T2) Compliance Status

The school district has no citations of Title IID non-compliance identified during this visit.

Public School District’s Title III (English Language Learners) Compliance Status

The school district has no citations of Title III non-compliance identified during this visit.

Public School District’s Title IVA Compliance Status

The school district has no citations of Title IVA (SDFSC) non-compliance identified during this on-site visit.

Public School District’s Title V (Innovative Programs) Compliance Status

The school district has no citations of Title V non-compliance identified during this visit.

Public School District’s Title XC (Education for Homeless Children and Youth) Compliance Status

The school district has no citations of Title XC non-compliance identified during this visit.

Areas of Non-Compliance

The Washington Community School District shall submit corrections or plans of correction for each of the items listed below for approval to the Site Team Leader within 45 business days of the receipt of this report. *The school or school district may choose to use the following matrix as a format for the development of an action plan or develop its own.*

Chapter 12 Non-Compliance Accreditation Issues

Noncompliance Issue	Actions to Correct Noncompliance Issue	Timeline to Complete Actions
1. TL2READ. The school district employs Julienne Gentz, folder #152720, who is not endorsed/certificated for content area(s) Reading.		

281—IAC 12.4(8)	
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(Signature of Superintendent of Public School District or Administrator of Accredited Nonpublic School)



Debbie Boring
Division of Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education
Iowa Department of Education



Del Hoover
Deputy Division Administrator
Division of Early Childhood, Elementary, and Secondary Education
Iowa Department of Education

cc: Team Members
School Board President
Department of Education Official File
AEA Office