

NEBRASKA CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT EXTERNAL REPORT

(Revised, July, 2022)



ACCREDITATION, CERTIFICATION
& APPROVAL

Prepared For:	Southern Public Schools
Head Administrator:	Dr. Christopher Prosocki
Dates of Visit:	February 27th-28th, 2024

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Introduction and Purpose of the Visit

92 NAC 10 “Regulations and Procedures for the Accreditation of Nebraska Schools”

Section 009 of Rule 10 describes Continuous Improvement as, *“A systematic on-going process guides planning, implementation, and evaluation and renewal of continuous school improvement activities to meet local and statewide goals and priorities. The school improvement process focuses on improving student learning. The process includes a periodic review by visiting educators who provide consultation to the local school/community in continued accomplishment of plans and goals.”*

The purpose of the External Visit is to review the documentation and efforts for continuous improvement by the school system and to affirm compliance with Section 009 of Rule 10. External Visits also serve to provide meaningful feedback that can be used to continue improvement goals. In Nebraska, a network of professional peers volunteer to serve on External Teams. Prior to the visit, team members verse themselves on best practices and data literacy for Continuous Improvement.

The evidence for Southern’s External Visit was organized on the Southern Public Schools CIP Google Website, which was created by Dr. Prososki and members of his school improvement team. The external visit team received access to the website well ahead of the visit, which occurred on February 27th-28th, 2024. The website included information regarding curriculum, district information, external visit, school improvement overview and external links. For the purposes of the visit, the external visit team focused primarily on the external visit and school data components of the website.

The visit officially began at 6:45 PM, on Tuesday, February 27th, when Dr. Prososki and the school improvement team presented their “School Improvement Journey” to the

external visit team. The presentation provided a comprehensive overview for the external visit team. The opening presentation opened with a wonderful school produced video that truly set the tone for the visit and gave an overview of the district. Dr. Prosocki then utilized an informative slide deck, which added to the school's profile and shared data supporting the continuous improvement efforts made by Southern Public Schools over the previous five years.

After the School Improvement Journey Presentation, the external visit team interviewed members of the Board of Education before concluding that day's visit. On Wednesday, February 28th (Day 2), the visit resumed at 7 AM. Throughout the day, the external visit team toured the buildings, interviewed certified staff, classified staff, parents/patrons, students and Southern's District Leadership Team. These interviews added a great deal to the overall information gathering process and provided a number of correlations between information provided by the Dr. Prosocki prior to the visit and what was shared during the opening presentation.

During lunch, the external visit team began initial reflections on the visit and continued efforts to identify areas for commendation and recommendation. The external visit team also identified some areas they wanted to explore further during the District Leadership Team interview, which was scheduled after lunch. The District Leadership Team interview allowed the external visit team to ask clarifying questions regarding themes that were identified during stakeholder interviews.

After the District Leadership Team interview, the external visit team focused on finalizing information they wanted to include in the summary presentation and final report. An abbreviated form of the summary presentation was shared with Dr. Prosocki and the District Leadership Team for feedback, prior to the final summary presentation given to Southern's staff.

External Visitation Team

The responsibilities of the External Team include:

- 1) Review school system evidence of Continuous Improvement.
- 2) Observe educational services provided by the school system.
- 3) Assess the progress and effectiveness of the Action Plan.
- 4) Provide feedback for continued improvement.

Peer review is a common strategy for supporting school and teacher improvement. Research suggests the potential value in peer review as a part of larger school improvement initiatives. Of particular note, some suggest that peer reviews may reduce "top-down" accountability mindsets and generate greater practitioner-driven innovations. Several states utilize peer review as part of their larger school quality, accountability, or accreditation processes, though peer review is rarely linked to a

broader CI process. (*Data Literacy Workbook, Hanover Research, February 2022*)

Serving as an External Visit volunteer is an important responsibility. The Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) appreciates the leadership skills and peer collegiality of educators throughout the state that volunteer for this role.

External Team Roster

	Name	Position	Phone	Email
Team Leader	Sean Molloy	Superintendent, Fairbury Public Schools	(402) 209-3961	smolloy@fairburyjeffs. org
Member	Dr. Melissa Poloncic	Superintendent, DC West Community Schools	(402) 359-2583	mpoloncic@dcwest. org
Member	Nate Seggerman	Principal, Norris High School, Norris School District 160	(402) 366-2262	nate.seggerman@ns dtitans.org
Member	Shelly Leyden	Principal, Falls City Public Schools	(402) 540-7303	sleyden@fallscityps.or g
Member	Dr. Tara Gossman	Teaching & Learning Specialist, ESU #4	(402) 274-5042	tgossman@esu4.net

Schedule

External Visitation Schedule Southern Public Schools

Hotel: Holiday Inn Express & Suites
4005 North 6th Street
Beatrice, NE 68310
Phone: 402.228.7000

Tuesday, February 27

4:00 p.m.	Check Inn	Holiday Inn Express & Suites	External Visitation Team
5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.	External Visitation Team Arrives	Jr./Sr. High School Media Center 115 South 11 th Street Wymore, NE 68466	External Visitation Team
6:00 p.m. – 6:45 p.m.	Dinner	Jr./Sr. High School Commons	Administration, Board Members, External Visitation Team, & School Improvement Team
6:45 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.	School Improvement Journey Presentation	Jr./Sr. High School Commons	Superintendent/School Improvement Team
7:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.	Interviews with Board Members	Jr./Sr. High School Library	Board Members & External Visitation Team (6 Board Members)
8:00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.	Team Debriefing & Review of Schedule	Jr./Sr. High School Library	External Visitation Team

Wednesday, February 28

7:20 a.m. – 7:45 a.m.	Light Breakfast	Jr./Sr. High School Library 115 South 11 th Street Wymore, NE 68466	Administration & External Visitation Team
7:45 a.m. – 9:05 a.m.	Tour of Buildings	Preschools, Elementary School, & Jr./Sr. High School	Principals & External Visitation Team
9:05 a.m. – 9:35 a.m.	Interviews with Certified Staff	Jr./Sr. High School Library	Certified Staff & External Visitation Team = Steph Ware, Jolene Bartels, Kylie Betten, Shannon Burgess, Dominique Clay, Josie Hulse, & Jeff Tunink
9:40 a.m. – 10:10 a.m.	Interviews with Classified Staff	Jr./Sr. High School Library	Classified Staff & External Visitation Team

			= Dyan Allington, Cody Sabey, Dawn Rakes, Patty Novotny, Kim McMurray, & Dave Kaster
10:10 a.m. – 10:40 a.m.	Break, Classroom Observations, Other Needed Items, & Team Artifact Review	Jr./Sr. High School Library	External Visitation Team & TBD
10:40 a.m. – 11:10 a.m.	Interviews with Parent/Patrons Interviews	Jr./Sr. High School Library	External Visitation Team & Parent/Patrons = Kaylne Brunsbach, Jacque Borzekofski, Sheena Yockel, Lea Meece, Kelsey Stitt, Dana Dorn, Emily Shockley, & Taylor Schmidt
11:15 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.	Interviews with Students	Jr./Sr. High School Library	External Visitation Team & Students ELEM= Bo Stevent, Helen Vrtiska, Evan Kaster, Emery Saathoff HS = Bladen Weiner, Jaidyn Allington, Carsen Goes, Emma Spencer, Paxx Adams, Olive Sabey-Vogele, Landen Frerichs, & Emma Eisenhauer
11:45 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	Lunch	Jr./Sr. High School Library	External Visitation Team
12:30 p.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Interviews with District Leadership Team	Jr./Sr. High School Library	Administration, Counselors, & External Visitation Team (5 Staff Total)
1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.	Team Artifact Review & Discussion/Draft Commendations & Recommendations	Jr./Sr. High School Library	External Visitation Team
3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	Preliminary Findings Presentation	Jr./Sr. High School Library	District Leadership Team & External Visitation Team
3:45 p.m.	Oral Report	Jr./Sr. High School Auditorium	All Certificated Staff & External Visitation Team

Review of Continuous Improvement

NAC 92 Chapter 10

009.01A The school system develops and implements a continuous school improvement process to promote quality learning for all students. This process includes procedures and strategies to address quality learning, equity, and accountability.

The Southern Public Schools Continuous Improvement Process consists of a steering committee, the evaluation of data at the district and building level, implementation and evaluation in accordance with standards and professional learning.

009.01A1 Review and update of the mission and vision statements.

Southern Public Schools revised their school mission and vision statements in the Spring of 2020 after soliciting feedback from parents, patrons, staff and school board members through various means.

Vision: The Southern School District prepares students through educational experiences to be responsible, respectful, and safe.

Mission: Every Student, Every Day, The Southern Way.

In addition, belief statements were established for the school, students, and community.

- The School will:
 - Inspire students to communicate to society as knowledgeable, responsible, and well-rounded citizens.
 - Ensure a safe, positive, and supportive learning environment with high expectations for student achievement.
 - Encourage students with the opportunity to learn, grow, and succeed.

- The Students will:
 - Learn the value of leadership and how to be independent problem-solving thinkers.
 - Become confident and goal-oriented lifelong learners in college and career readiness skills.
 - Be assured in their abilities, recognize their accomplishments, and show confidence in their growing abilities.

- The Community will:
 - Support students in their growth and lifelong learning.
 - Encourage district staff and leadership in creating a learning environment in support of student achievement.
 - Provide the resources to ensure the district's ability to deliver a supportive learning environment and create responsible citizens.

The "Southern Way" was discussed and observed throughout the external visit. It is evident that Southern Public Schools is a district that focuses on school pride and supporting the community. School pride is contagious in the community. The "shout outs" of school successes are announced over the intercoms to celebrate the accomplishments of academic and activity excellence. Stakeholders know the safety

protocols and procedures. The ongoing professional development the teachers attend focus on to improve outcomes for students.

Overall, the external visit affirmed the school's commitment to its mission statement and provided valuable insights for further enhancing its impact and effectiveness.

009.01A2 Collection and analysis of data about student performance, demographics, learning climate, and former high school students.

Southern Public Schools has focused for the last five years on three school improvement goals to improve student achievement in reading, math, and the overall school culture. Academic goals were identified through monitoring of NSCAS ELA, DIBELS Reading, and MAP scores as well as NSCAS Math, ACT Math, and MAP scores in reading and math, respectively.

Historically, the school improvement goals established for student achievement in reading and math are as follows:

Reading / English Language Arts

- Annually through the spring of 2022, 75% of students in grades 2-10 will increase their **MAP Reading** RIT scores by 4 points or maintain their RIT scores if they were at or above grade level.
 - Of 9 grade level groups in grades 2-10, three, three, and four groups met this goal by the spring of 2019, 2021, and 2022 respectively.
- For the 2022-2023 school year, by the spring of 2023, 75% of students in grades 3-5 and grades 6-8 will increase their **NSCAS ELA** scores by 16 and 6 points, respectively, or maintain scores if they are at or above grade level.
 - 1 of the 6 grade levels tested met this goal.
- This goal is also in place for the 2023-2024 school year.

Mathematics

- Annually through the spring of 2022, 75% of students in grades 2-10 will increase their **MAP Math** RIT scores by 4 points or maintain their RIT scores if they were at or above grade level.
 - Of 9 grade level groups in grades 2-10, six, five, and five groups met this goal by the spring of 2019, 2021, and 2022 respectively.
- For the 2022-2023 school year, by the spring of 2023, 75% of students in grades 3-5 and 6-8 will increase their **NSCAS Math** scores by 16 and 6 points, respectively, or maintain scores if they are at or above grade level.
 - 5 of the 6 grade levels tested met this goal.
- This goal is also in place for the 2023-2024 school year.

School culture baseline data was measured through the administration of multiple surveys to various district stakeholders and comparisons made with the School Culture and Climate rubric from NDE in an effort to formalize a measurable cultural goal. Ongoing surveys of stakeholder groups are administered and reviewed by the district to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement on school culture initiatives including communication, safety, and updating physical facilities.

Southern's commitment to consistent monitoring of data has allowed them to track progress towards their school improvement goals and the effectiveness of interventions implemented.

009.01A3 Selection of improvement goals. At least one goal is directed toward improving student academic achievement

Southern's strategic plan 2020-2024 was inclusive of the guiding principles: high-quality instruction and learning experiences, whole child focus, culture and connectedness, personnel effectiveness, and district resources. They focused on the principle or goal to improve student academic achievement by implementing strategies within high-quality instruction and learning experiences, such as:

- Set high expectations to ensure diverse learning opportunities for the students at Southern Public Schools
- Ensure curriculum and instructional methods are properly, equitably, and consistently implemented from PK-12.
- Challenge and engage students in learning experiences that enable personal growth and learning success.
- Assess and consider expansion and improvement of learning opportunities to support student engagement and preparedness.
- Increase the utilization of data to inform decisions at the classroom, building, and district levels.
- Develop and encourage a culture of professional collaboration of shared responsibilities for improving the quality of instruction for all students.

Implementation of Southern's strategic plan enveloped their specific school improvement goals:

- All students will improve their mathematics skills
- All students will improve their reading comprehension

009.01A4 Development and implementation of an improvement plan which includes procedures, strategies, actions to achieve goals, and an aligned professional development plan.

Reading

- **Goal #1** - *All students will improve their reading comprehension.*
 - Southern Public Schools are continuously striving to accomplish this goal. Through professional development, data analysis, and multiple action

steps, Southern has taken action to improve reading. The past years have shown the adoption of new HQIM ELA Materials (Wonders, Heggerty, and Collection), DIBELS & NSCAS data monitoring, and taking a three-year commitment to the WORDS Project. The district has also implemented IXL and Accelerated Reader as supplementals to improve district reading.

Math

- **Goal #2** - *All students will improve their mathematics skills.*
 - Southern Public Schools are consistently endeavoring to achieve this goal. With the adoption of new HQIM math materials K-8 (enVision), and the implementation of IXL for interventions, the district is taking steps to close gaps and create coherence. Southern had plans to participate in the Math Acceleration Project, and it is encouraged for this to be started the next school year. NSCAS data is utilized to review math skills.

Culture

- **Goal #3** - *Southern Public Schools will continuously improve the culture of the district.*
 - Southern Public Schools have taken many steps towards improving school culture. The district collected data through administered surveys that guided future action steps. New endeavors such as the Southern Spotlight, social media marketing presence, new teacher mentoring, and the social committee are strong steps towards improving and maintaining the culture of the district. Southern has taken a strong stance around school safety as well. Along with a multitude of training, the district is renovating school entrances to be safer.

009.01A5 Evaluation of progress toward improvement goals.

In its review of the goals worked on by the staff at Southern Public Schools, the external team identified the following commendations and recommendations.

Commendations:

The external team was very impressed with the work that the staff at Southern Public Schools accomplished throughout the last five years in regard to continuous improvement.

Reading

- **Goal #1** - *All students will improve their reading comprehension.*
 - Concerted effort to provide a variety of professional development opportunities for elementary staff. Professional development opportunities included, but are not limited to:
 - WORDS Project at K-3
 - Science of Reading
 - Southern Public Schools has adopted and implemented the *Wonders* ELA curriculum.

- DIBELS 8 data is collected and used by the Title teacher to provide interventions.

Math

- **Goal #2** - *All students will improve their mathematics skills.*
 - Southern Public Schools has adopted and implemented the *Envisions* Math curriculum K-12
 - Southern Jr-Sr High School has implemented an Integrated Math course, which provides an additional math offering to students.
 - Southern has experienced increased proficiency on NSCAS Math (3-8).

Culture

- **Goal #3** - *Southern Public Schools will continuously improve the culture of the district.*
 - There is obvious pride and appreciation in the school district across all stakeholder groups.
 - Southern is in the process of developing a new strategic plan to include revision of mission and belief statements.
 - Southern has prioritized school safety: controlled access, implementation of part-time SRO, SRP Protocols, CPR training, recently rewritten EOP.
 - There has been an emphasis on increased communication channels: website, social media, formal communication.
 - Southern Jr-Sr High School has added additional opportunities for student learning and engagement: FFA, welding, eSports, etc.

Recommendations:

The external team provides the following recommendations directed to each of the goals for Southern Public Schools.

Reading

- **Goal #1** - *All students will improve their reading comprehension.*
 - Establish a formal, comprehensive reading professional development plan K-12.
 - Establish a formal process for using defined decision rules to make data-informed interventions/instructional decisions K-12. E.g., dedicated intervention block built into the elementary master schedule, which aligns with DIBELS.
 - Explore additional standardized/norm-referenced data sources K-12.
 - Emphasis on removing Federal Designations (ESSA) - Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CTSI).

Math

- **Goal #2** - *All students will improve their mathematical skills.*
 - Establish a formal, comprehensive math professional development plan K-12.

- Establish a formal process for using defined decision rules to make data-informed interventions/instructional decisions K-12.
- Explore additional standardized/norm-referenced data sources K-12.
- Emphasis on removing Federal Designations (ESSA) - Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CTSI).

Culture

- **Goal #3** - *Southern Public Schools will continuously improve the culture of the district.*
 - Develop a shared belief that through collective action, educators can influence student outcomes and increase achievement for all students.
 - Identify measurable outcomes to monitor progress on school culture and collective efficacy.
 - Establish and expand opportunities for two-way communication from stakeholder groups, particularly underrepresented secondary students, for input on school culture and initiatives.
 - Identify opportunities to increase involvement of all students in at least one activity to enhance engagement.

Summary

The staff at Southern Public Schools recognizes the importance of continuous improvement and the success of their students. They have worked hard to establish a learning community that emphasizes high expectations, values and hard work. Southern has worked incredibly hard over the last five years and experienced much success.

Like all small, rural communities, it is imperative that they keep a focus on providing the best education possible, not only to prepare their students for the challenges ahead, but also to attract new families to the community and support the local economy.

There are high quality people working for Southern Public Schools. Dr. Prosocki is truly dedicated to creating the best possible education for students, as well as the best possible working conditions for staff. Administration is supportive, values teachers and supports them in their efforts. Teachers and support staff are deeply committed to doing what is best for students, regardless of barriers or challenges that may be present.

On behalf of the external visit team, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for all that Southern Public Schools does for students. We are supremely confident that their focus will remain on students and their well-being.

From stakeholder interviews held February 27-28th, 2024

Southern Public Schools - Exit Slides

