Examples of Language from a Visiting Committee Report
Showing Responses to the Several Prompts

Organization

Internal Communication and Planning

With a small staff, teachers assume many leadership roles. Staff report they are committed to a consensus-building and shared decision making process which often require large blocks of time and resources. Thus, email is commonly used. All the staff’s work on site is supplemented, in part by a professional on-line collaboration site. The report states that this sense of professional collaboration is supported by staff surveys, however, response data were not provided in the self-study. Conversations with administrators, faculty, and classified staff clearly identify appropriate communication.

Curriculum

Accessibility of All Students to Curriculum including Online Instruction

While many students enter below grade-level in both mathematics and reading, struggling students in the 9th grade are enrolled in either of both a Mathematics and English double block class. There is also a support class in conjunction with Algebra I for students who need additional support. However, even with the change to course offering in the 9th grade, data from the local benchmark tests indicates that all students leaving 9th grade are not performing at the proficient or advance level and may continue to struggle. Department-based pathways are in place for all departments; professional development is often directed at supporting struggling students, English learners, and students with special who continue to lag behind. Access to online instruction is limited by the license agreement; some students are not able to enroll and complete courses in a timely manner. This concern was voiced by both students and family members.

Congruence

Even though congruence between the actual concepts and skills taught and the academic standards may exist, it was unintentional- not strategically planned or developed to directly support the learner outcomes – however, it works. Primary evidence of congruence was discovered via focus group discussions. Such evidence related actual concepts and skills taught is abundant. Implementing the Common Core State Standards fully remains a work in progress.

Instruction

Current Knowledge including Online Instruction

Each classroom is set-up for active use of technology plus there are three mobile carts of laptops, and several document cameras available. However, there are no printing capabilities for students. Both Read 180 and the College Readiness classes use computers almost daily. There is also a newly instituted Digital Arts class. The report indicates that a “significant number” of the laptops do not work and that the school’s wireless network is “slow and unreliable with insufficient bandwidth to support a class of students.” These deficiencies make it difficult to regularly and effectively use multimedia and other technology in the classroom.
Examination of Student Work including Online Work

There were a number of inconsistencies in regards to how students demonstrate learning. While some classes had clear evidence of student work posted, there were many classes with little to no evidence posted. Many classes relied on student call and response techniques for formative assessment.

Some teachers had their email address posted and were using Edmodo for students. Teachers were heard praising students for emailing them assignments. Students were rarely, if ever, engaged with technology during lessons observed by the visiting team.

Conclusions

Issues related to students’ reading and writing abilities have been addressed, however, program effectiveness has not been evaluated (Sustained Silent Reading and a time commitment to reading and writing). Student performance on virtually all measures (grades, graduation rate, percent graduating, percent accepted to a four-year college. CST scores in all subject areas) remains relatively stagnant with roughly 50% of students at all grade levels earning an A or B grade; just under 20% earn a D or F grade even with the No Zero Policy.

With the emphasis of critical learner needs being academic proficiency (particularly in literacy and numeracy skills) instructional practices in place while varied seem inadequate or inconsistent. Over the past three years, progress in reaching goals which touch on the critical academic needs based on available measures. No doubt, difficult, administrative and teaching staff turnover compound the problem of a cohesive staff working together to common goals.

Assessment

Modifications Based on Assessment Results

Although the report was silent on how the school was using results of assessment data through visit it was discovered that staff are beginning to make use of reports generated in Tableau PowerSchool make determinations and areas that need to be modified based on the assessment results.

In online classes, students are strongly encouraged to make adequate progress in their courses. The APEX teacher sets clear guidelines about adequate progress, and sets students behavior goals appropriately. If the students do not make adequate progress, they may be given a different option to recover credits, such as night school, or BYU.

However, the Visiting Team received conflicting accounts that students are being awarded credits by a teacher that may not be credentialed or qualified to provide support in all subject areas.

Culture and Support

Direct Connections

While there was no direct response in the self-study, the Visiting Committee ascertained that students are provided multiple supports to meet the schoolwide learner outcomes. The self-study and focus groups report that counselors are pulled into advisory courses to provide direct guidance and assistance with activities needed to attend college (FAFSA, Common App, transcript audits). Students can be referred by staff, administration, parents, and peers for a mental health evaluation that is conducted by the school psychologist. If further services are deemed necessary, families are referred to outside sources.