
4. The Mansfield City School District has access to the Ohio Department of Education's Special Education Regional Resource Center (SERRC), and there is evidence that this resource is used frequently and appropriately. In addition, the district may wish to seek assistance from federal IDEA-Part D technical assistance providers. Specifically, there are centers that focus on access to the general curriculum and positive behavior intervention and supports. Relevant contact information is as follows:

- The Access Center: Improving Outcomes for Students with Disabilities K-8:
www.k8accesscenter.org

The Access Center, funded by the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education, is dedicated to building the capacity of technical assistance systems, states, districts, and schools, to help students with disabilities learn from the general education curriculum.

- The National Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports: www.pbis.org.

This Center, established by the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education, gives schools capacity-building information and technical assistance for identifying, adapting, and sustaining effective schoolwide disciplinary practices.

SECTION III: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INITIAL DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT PLAN

It should be anticipated that the improvement of student achievement to meet state standards by the Mansfield City School District will be difficult and arduous. Initially, it can be expected to require more time, energy, commitment, and fortitude than might be the case in other settings due to the need for Mansfield to create or strengthen fundamental planning, management, and evaluation systems at the district level. The process of school improvement is hard, long-term work under the best of circumstances. There is no doubt that many of the recommendations we have made, consistent with a number of successful reform initiatives throughout the country, will be challenging to implement. However, in the presence of strong leadership, direction, and concerted action, there is no doubt in our minds that significant improvement in student performance can be accomplished by the staff whom we have met in the course of this review.

We believe, as we have stated previously, that there are a set of fundamental, requisite tasks that must be accomplished by the district as soon as possible to enable improvement measures to develop and take hold. First and foremost is **the development of vision, strategy, and goals** that will define the direction of the Mansfield City School District for the future and provide the basis for planning, budgeting, staffing, and determining priorities.

Second, the district must create transparency in budgeting that includes **a budget document that specifies the current allocations supporting each school and district office function**. As soon as this document is available, the district should engage in a formal resource allocation study in an effort to repurpose as much funding as possible for expanded professional development for teachers and principals, additional instructional time for students, and other instructional/curricular investments.

At the same time, the District should initiate work to establish two essential systems:

- **An internal accountability plan** that can be used as the basis for differentiating district supervision and intervention among schools.
- **A comprehensive professional development plan** based on building staff capacity in relation to targets for student achievement and district strategy.

The development of these plans should be closely followed by **two broad-based studies** to determine:

- **The long-term organization and design of the high school program**
- **The future of middle-grade (6–8) education**

Many of the issues facing the Mansfield schools are interrelated and there is a danger in proceeding with too many activities ahead of a comprehensive, aligned, long-term plan. However, in several areas the district may benefit from piloting or field-testing new approaches as a means of introducing innovative ideas and building the capacity and commitment for further change. We would suggest the following be given immediate consideration:

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- 1. Plan for the extension of the current school year of each elementary school by 20, 4-hour days for reading instruction for as many students as possible with priority given to first, second, and third graders who are not yet reading at grade level.**

Academy-based bridge programs should also be offered to at-risk prospective ninth graders as an early start to their next school year.

- 2. Plan to initiate multiyear looping at several elementary schools where interest exists or can be developed; pilot vertical or horizontal team structures at several elementary schools where interest exists or can be developed.**
- 3. Field test a standards-based math program such as Chicago Math at one middle school or one middle grade in both schools with accompanying professional development.**
- 4. Plan and implement a full continuum of special education services at one school, including a full inclusion model for students with learning disabilities.**
- 5. Plan for implementation in the 2005–2006 school year a development program for principals that focuses on instructional leadership skills and behaviors.**
- 6. Reorganize central office along the lines of a CAO, COO model and reconstitute the current curriculum staff for school intervention.**

The acclaimed management expert Peter Drucker wrote that, “Every organization is perfectly designed to obtain the results it is getting.” This is true for all organizations and true for the Mansfield schools at this time. To achieve better results the current design of the organization must change. For the Mansfield City School District, this means developing a clear, aligned strategy and direction for improving results, creating greater accountability and capacity at all levels of the system, moving from an individualistic to collaborative professional culture, using time as a variable in student achievement, and organizing instruction in a manner that enables all students to reach state standards.

We hope our recommendations are helpful to District leaders at all levels who are committed to this change and that we may be of further assistance to the District as it strives for improvement.