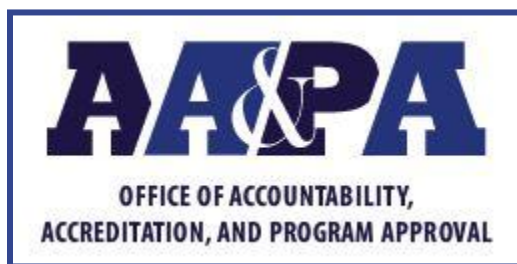


NEBRASKA CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT EXTERNAL REPORT

(Revised, July, 2022)



Prepared For:	Mead Public Schools
Head Administrator:	PJ Quinn, Superintendent
Dates of Visit:	November 12-13, 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 serve to also 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.

Previous External Visit

The previous External Visit for Mead Public Schools was conducted on October 25-28, 2020. This particular event was a Cognia® School Accreditation Engagement Review. Recommendations from that external visit included 1), establish an instructional technology plan 2), develop a formal process for implementing, monitoring and improving curriculum and instruction, and 3)

develop a process for soliciting, collecting and using stakeholder feedback data.

Preparation for the External Visit

The administrative team (Superintendent PJ Quinn, Principal Darin Kovar and Director of Special Programs Terry Hickman) met with the external team leader on several occasions to prepare for the external visit. This included team member selection, information sharing, the 2-day external visit agenda, and expected outcomes from the visit. The external team leader created a Google hyperdoc that was populated by the district several weeks in advance of the external visit for information sharing.

The external team leader met with the members of the external team via Zoom for team orientation and assignments, evidence review and discussion, and to determine team member responsibilities.

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.

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	Jeff McQuistan	Staff Development Director, ESU #17	402-387-2520	jmcquistan@esu17.org
Member	Kelly Ballinger	Elementary Principal, Pender Public Schools	402-385-3244	keballi1@penderschools.org
Member	Heidi Farmer	NeMTSS Region 1 Support Lead, ESU #6	402-761-3341	heidi.farmer@esu6.org
Member	Jordan Wallman	HS Social Science Teacher, Ashland-Greenwood Public Schools	402-944-2128	jordan.wallman@agps.org

Onsite Agenda

The Onsite Visit was scheduled for November 12-13, 2024. The agenda was shared with the external team leader on September 4, who reviewed the agenda with the external team on November 6.

Day 1 - November 12, 2024

- 1:00 pm External Team arrives
- 1:15 pm CIP Team Opening Presentation & Interview (30 min)
- 2:00 pm Student Interviews Grades 3-6 (30 min)
- 2:45 pm Student Interviews Grades 7-12 (30 min)
- 3:30 pm Staff Interviews (30 min)
- 4:15 pm Community Interviews (30 min)
- 5:30 pm Evening Team Meeting (60 min)

Day 2 - November 13, 2024

- 8:00 am Meet with Administrative Team (30 min)
- 8:45 am Elementary Classroom Visits (60 min)
- 10:00 am Secondary Classroom Visits (60 min)
- 11:15 am Lunch (30 min)
- 12:30 pm External Team Work Time (2 hrs, 30 min)
- 3:30 pm Exit Presentation

The Onsite Visit

The first day of the external visit began with an opening presentation by the School Improvement Leadership Team (SILT), followed by an interview. The remainder of the first day included student, staff and community interviews. The external team traveled to Omaha that evening for a planning meeting and overnight lodging. On the second day of the visit the external team met with the administrative team, conducted classroom visits and met to arrive at findings that were shared during the exit presentation, concluding the external visit.

Following the Visit

Members of the external team each had a role in completing the written report. The team leader reviewed the report prior to sharing it with the district and submitting a copy to the NDE along with a copy of the district's action plan.

Review of the Continuous Improvement Process






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 Mead Public Schools Continuous Improvement Process is facilitated through coordinated efforts of the administrative team and the School Improvement Leadership Team (SILT). Additional district committees focus on specific aspects of the continuous improvement process, including Safety, Curriculum & Textbook, MTSS, Technology, Professional Growth, and Data.


AQuESTT Tenets

The district shared procedures and programs that have been implemented, which have resulted in improved learning, equity, and accountability related to the AQuESTT Tenets.

	<p>Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vision, Mission, Core Belief Statements • School Improvement Leadership Team (SILT) CIP Membership • CIP Goals, District and Committee Action Plans • In-service Sample Agendas • Professional Development that supports Goals • AQuESTT Accountability
	<p>Educational Opportunities and Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary and High School Student Handbooks • Staff Handbook: nutrition program, health services, counseling services, special education services • Beginnergarten • Technology Plan • MTSS Decision Rules & Action Plan • High Ability Learners
	<p>Transitions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6th Grade Move Up Day • 7th Grade Orientation • Graduation Rate and College-Going Rate • Option Enrollment
	<p>Positive Partnerships, Relationships, and Success</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance & Dropout Rates • Chronic Absenteeism Reduction • Parent-Teacher Conference Participation • School District Facebook Page • Student, Teacher, Parents, Graduates Perceptual Survey Results
	<p>Educator Effectiveness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Articulation (Planbook) • Curriculum Audit (Units taught in- and out-of endorsed area) • Instructional Materials selection process/schedule • Elementary Classroom Schedule; Master Secondary Bell Schedule, including times • 30 Teacher FTE, 70% Teachers with Master's Degree, 20.67 Average Years Experience (NEP)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 76% Courses (HS) 89% (Elem) taught by teachers having certificates with appropriate endorsements
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	Student Achievement and Growth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District Assessment System • NSCAS Student Performance Disaggregated • Analysis of ACT, NSCAS and MAP assessment results
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	Postsecondary, Career, and Civic Readiness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dual Credit • 57% Junior & 60% Seniors enrolled in advanced coursework • Students meeting or exceeding ACT advanced benchmark in ELA (81%), math(73%) and science (77%) • Career Readiness • 85% Students CTE participants • 42% Students CTE concentrators • 15% 2024 Seniors participated in work-based learning (Work Release or Job Skills Training)
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009.01A1 Review and update of the mission and vision statements.

The mission statement was created several cycles ago and has been reviewed following each external visitation. The district intends to revisit the mission statement following this external visit.

Mission Statement: The Mead Public Schools, families, and community shall provide learning opportunities that challenge and encourage all learners.

Vision Statement: Mead Public Schools' stakeholders will be engaged, motivated members of an educational culture that believes education is essential to a fulfilling future.

Core Beliefs: We believe:

- All students can learn
- Diversity will be recognized and respected
- In providing a physically and emotionally safe learning environment

- Education is a shared responsibility of students, staff, family, and community
- Proper communication is fundamental to effective education
- Respect for self and others is vital to education
- In providing a foundation for continued learning
- In using data to make educational decisions
- Honesty and academic integrity are essential to education.

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

Opening Presentation

The opening presentation by the SILT included an overview of the mission, vision, four core principles, core beliefs of the district, the current CIP goals, the CIP committee structure, student and educator demographics, fall MAP test results, longitudinal ACT data, and AQuESTT Classification for 2023. The district showcased student participation in the extensive activities program provided by the district, including a student highlight video.

Data points included in the presentation:

- Full days of professional development are scheduled once a month during the first semester, which provide opportunities for educator learning, collaboration and work time.
- All teachers are involved in at least one CIP committee.
- Mead has a significant number of option enrollment students. Over 25% of students attending Mead Public Schools come from 11 other communities.
- The certificated staff has a low turnover rate. Teachers at Mead Public Schools average over 20 years in education, and over 12 years at MPS. 70% of teachers have master's degrees and have been in their current position 9+ years.
- 2 educators participated in the RESTORE grant through ESU #2 focused on HAL. Thirty-five students are currently involved in the HAL program.
- All targets included in Goal #1 (academic) have been reached.
 - APL instructional strategies have helped to establish common language and structures and are reinforced through follow-up professional development and review.

- Departmentalization at grades 4-5-6 has been beneficial academically to give students and teachers some flexibility as well as to ensure seamless instruction in the areas of ELA, math and science.
- Goal #2 has impacted professional practice and student learning related to technology implementation in the classroom. “Teachers Teach Teachers” has been an effective model for professional development.
- Goal #3 has had a positive effect on helping support new teachers’ preparation and understanding of procedural expectations through teacher mentors.
- All buildings and the district have earned Excellent AQuESTT ratings for the 2023-2024 school year.
- 95% of students participate in at least one NSAA activity. Mead Public Schools is “big enough to provide opportunities - small enough to include everyone.”

Focus Group Interviews

The external team engaged in several Focus Group interviews, including 20 students, 8 educators and 8 community stakeholders. The following highlights came from those interviews:

- “Family, Support, and Relationships” were mentioned as attributes of the school district by each focus group.
- Option enrollment students feel welcomed and included.

Notable quotes from the focus group interviews:

- “Everything in life is connected to something in school. If you’re going to get a job you’re going to know how to do it.” Elementary Student
- “This year is a lot better with adult to student interactions, student to adult, and among the students.” Secondary Student
- “We are here to do what is best for kids - not take the easy road.” Teacher
- “I’m really impressed by the quality of students that graduate from this school. I wish there was a better way to keep them here.” Parent

Classroom Visits

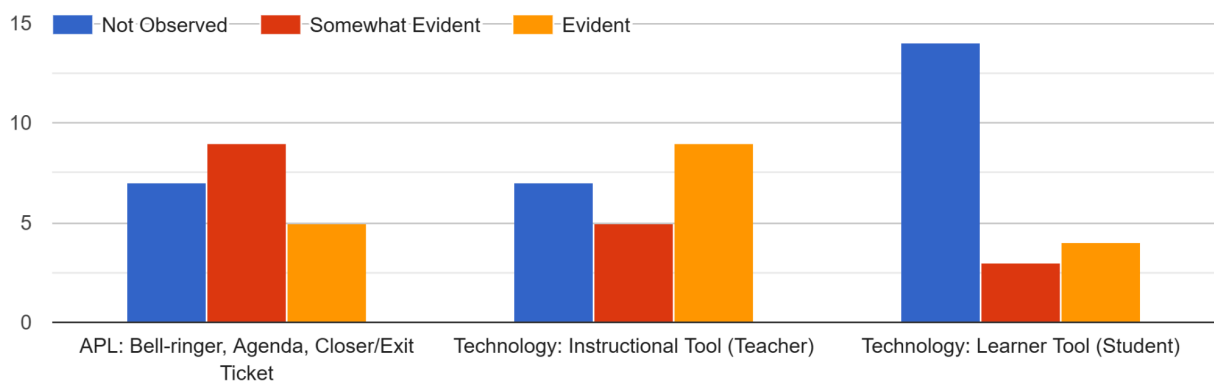
The purpose of the classroom visits is to validate the practices that are occurring in instructional settings.

The external team completed 21 classroom visits including 8 elementary classrooms and 13 secondary classrooms. Team members spent a total of 4 hours and 35 minutes in classroom settings, with an average of 13 minutes per classroom visit. The district administrative team identified the following items as focused instructional priorities that team members should see in all classrooms:

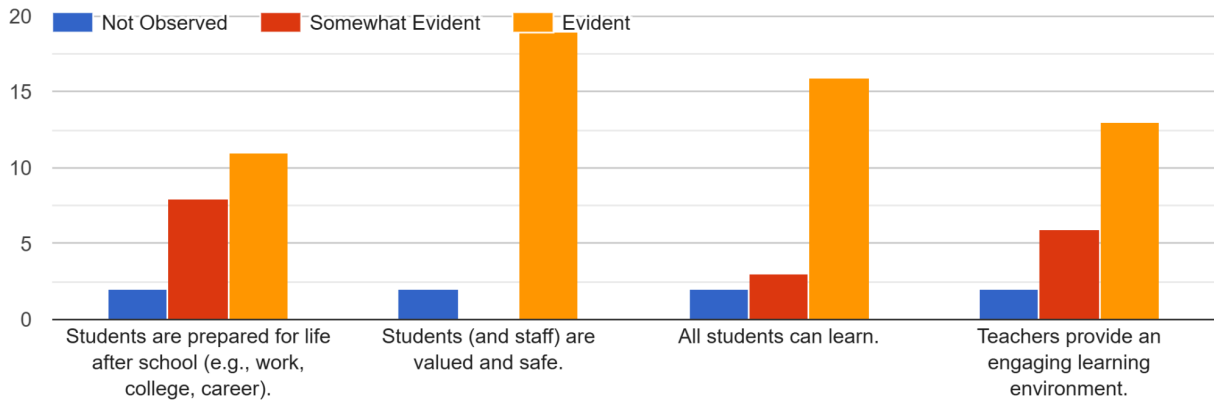
- APL instructional strategies, specifically bell-ringers, agendas, exit tickets
- Educators using technology as an instructional tool
- Students using technology to support their learning
- The Four Core Principles of the district:
 - Students are prepared for life after work.
 - Students and staff are valued and safe.
 - All students can learn.
 - Teachers provide an engaging learning environment.

The following charts summarize the findings from the classroom visits. An indication of “not observed” does not mean the practice is not happening, only that it was not observed during the time of the classroom visit.

Classroom Strategies



Four Core Principles



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

The district's improvement goals were selected based on 1) NSCAS, MAP, Fastbridge, and Educlimber performance data for Goal 1, 2) feedback from the previous visit regarding student engagement through technology for Goal 2, and 3) feedback from the previous visit regarding a formal induction and mentoring plan for new teachers for Goal 3.

Due to the district's previous association with Cognia®, an overall goal focused on improving overall student academic achievement was not specifically developed.

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

The district action plan includes three district improvement goals, the first of which is further supported by three additional elementary and secondary targets. The action plan follows the NeMTSS "Identify, Analyze, Plan, Implement, Reflect" framework.

■ Mead Action Plan.pdf

In addition to a district action plan, the district has additional committee action plans that address other specific areas, including 1) Curriculum & Textbook, 2) Safety, 3) MTSS, 4) Data, 5) Professional Growth and 6) Technology.

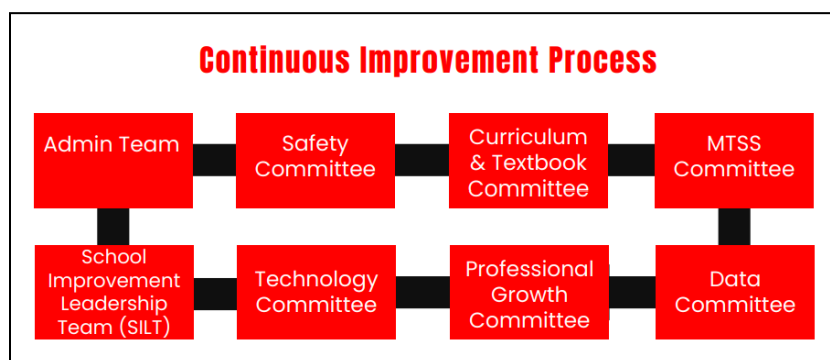
Each committee's action plan identifies 1) strategies, 2) person(s) accountable, 3) beginning/ending timeline, 4) resources and 5) staff development outcomes.

📄 CIP Committee Action Plans.pdf

Commendations:

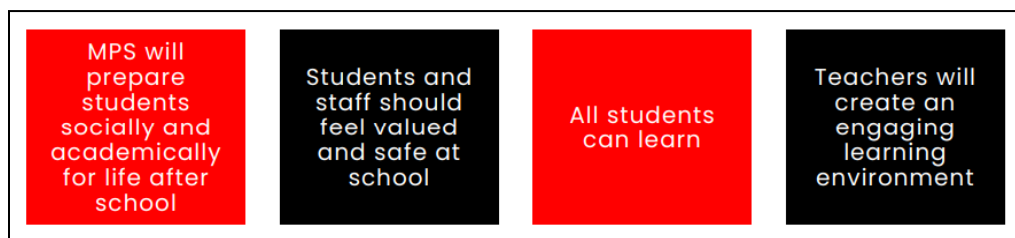
- All staff are engaged in a structured committee process that promotes collective ownership and responsibility.
- The district is committed to its Four Core Beliefs.
- The district has implemented strategies that have significantly reduced chronic absenteeism.
- Administrators and educators of Mead Public Schools are acknowledged for their strength and the role they play in the community.

All staff members at Mead Public Schools participate in at least one CIP committee, and many staff members shared that they were involved in multiple committees. Committees meet regularly and are provided time to meet during monthly professional development days. Each committee has an action plan and running agenda, and is provided with coordinated direction by the administrative team and the SILT committee.



The **Four Core Beliefs** is a philosophy that has been internalized and committed to districtwide. Evidence of practice was documented by the classroom visits conducted by the external team. Ultimately, this philosophy impacts the

learning environment and teacher-student relationships in a positive way that supports student wellness and achievement.



The district has made significant progress in reducing chronic absenteeism, which NDE targets in the Educational Opportunities Tenet of the 23-24 AQuESTT Report. By definition, a chronically absent student is any student absent for 10% or more of the days they were enrolled [for any reason other than participation in school-related activities]. The following table summarizes the progress made by the district in reducing chronic absenteeism. The Target Rate in column 3 represents a 10% reduction from the baseline established in 2021-2022. Overall, a significant reduction occurred at the high school level, while the district and middle school also exceeded their respective target goals.

Chronic Absenteeism	21-22 Rate	23-24 Target	23-24 Rate	Difference
District	17.05%	15.34%	9.09%	+6.25%
High School	39.53%	35.58%	15.38%	+20.20%
Middle School	12.77%	11.49%	4.76%	+6.73%
Elementary School	3.82%	3.44%	6.11%	-2.67%

The district credits a combination of strategies that have effectively addressed chronic absenteeism: 1) prioritizing engaging learning environments (Core Belief #4), 2) immediate support conversations with students and parents to discuss issues as they arise, 3) partnering with the Saunders County Youth Service System Office through the ARRIVE program, and 4) Saturday School.

The administrators and educators of the district were also acknowledged for their role in preparing students for success after graduation. Focus group interviews confirmed that school community relationships are positive, and educators have high expectations for their students, and are instrumental in providing diverse approaches to improving and achieving student success. The

administrators were acknowledged for their vision and leadership, both internally and externally through community group partnerships to optimize student success.

Recommendations:

- **Evaluate the effectiveness of the current committee structure and the role each plays in supporting the CIP goals.**

With the onset of a new CIP cycle, now would be an optimal time to reflect on the current committee structure, evaluate existing action plans, and determine whether a reconfigured committee approach could better serve the needs of the district, while providing for more efficiency, and possibly reducing the overall number of committees needed. It might be beneficial to study the data sets included in the CIP Template when determining a committee structure and how these committees could connect with and support each other.

In reviewing the teacher committee action plans, it was apparent that some committees might need additional support or clarification of purpose. Time could be spent on identifying current educational themes and developing a committee structure that supports those priorities.

- **Broaden the focus of the academic goal to include all students and consider a variety of data sources that can be used to monitor and evaluate progress.**

With the recent transition from Cognia® to the Nebraska Continuous Improvement model of accreditation, it is important to acknowledge that the Nebraska Department of Education requires at least one goal that specifically addresses student achievement. Typically this is a goal related to ELA or math. With the state's new focus on improving literacy, that could be a consideration.

When determining goals for the next improvement cycle, the district should consider a variety of data sources that can be used to identify, monitor and evaluate the progress toward achieving those goals. The Nebraska AQuESTT accountability system uses statewide assessment performance as a starting point for determining school and district ratings.

The district is also encouraged to articulate goal statements that focus solely on the academic target (i.e., the academic area, all students,

improvement/proficiency, a target number), and to save language related to strategies and approaches that will be implemented to support those goals for the action plans. Action plans that support the district improvement goals can vary based on data that is unique to each respective building.

Review of Progress on Continuous Improvement Goals

009.01A5 Evaluation of progress toward improvement goals.

Improvement Goal 1 Increase use of data to determine best use of resources (time, focus) to improve student achievement, growth and behaviors through Tier 1 and Tier 2 interventions.

- (Elementary Focus) At least 30% of special education students in grades 3-6 will meet or exceed their growth goal in math as measured by MAP testing comparing Fall to Spring of the current school year.
- (Secondary Focus) Reduce behaviors related to detention recidivism by implementing 7th-12th Tier 2 intervention strategy.
- (K-12 Focus) Train and implement APL classroom management and teaching strategies in all K-12 classrooms.

Commendations:

- Commitment to improving student performance, attendance and behavior
- Results of strategy implementation:
 - Met TIP Goal of 30% of students reaching MAP Math growth goal for special education students
 - Reduction of detentions and chronic absenteeism at the secondary level
 - Improved proficiency of student performance on NSCAS

Mead Public Schools has demonstrated a strong commitment to enhancing student performance, attendance, and behavior, as evidenced by its focused efforts to improve educational outcomes and address the needs of the whole child. The district's dedication is evident through the monthly allocation of time for committees to convene, engage in professional learning, and implement

strategies in classrooms. These efforts reflect a districtwide emphasis on continuous improvement. Community partnerships have been leveraged to address critical challenges, such as chronic absenteeism and mental health needs. The partnerships demonstrate how the district is able to provide whole child support.

The implementation of APL classroom management and teaching strategies has made an impact districtwide. All staff have received initial training, and ongoing reinforcement occurs weekly through the modeling of APL strategies during staff meetings. The district has plans to sustain and expand professional learning opportunities related to APL, ensuring systematic implementation across all classrooms.

During focus group interviews, stakeholders (including students, staff and families, consistently highlighted the strong school culture. The recurring theme of “Mead feels like a family” underscores the importance of relationships within and across the district. Classroom visits further validated this sentiment, where positive relationships between students and staff were evident.

As a result of strategy implementation, Mead Public Schools has successfully exceeded its TIP goal, with 38% of special education students in grades 3-6 achieving their MAP Math growth target, surpassing the 30% goal. At the secondary level, the district achieved a significant reduction in detention recidivism, fostering improved student behavior and a more positive school climate. Additionally, the district increased the percentage of students attaining proficiency on the NSCAS assessment, reflecting a commitment to academic excellence and continuous improvement across all grade levels.

Recommendations:

- Use multiple data sources to engage in root cause analysis in order to set academic goals.
- NDE requires that each district must have at least one goal that addresses improved student achievement.
- Broaden the academic goal to include all students.

To further improve student achievement, growth and behaviors, it is recommended that the district utilize multiple data sources for root cause

analysis. By triangulating data from diverse sources, such as NSCAS, MAP Growth, ACT, iReady, SAEBRs and behavior data, a comprehensive root cause analysis can be completed. The resulting goals will be more targeted and evidence-based, ensuring alignment with student needs.

In alignment with the expectations of NDE, it is necessary to ensure at least one academic goal focuses on improving student achievement. As the district shifts from Cognia® to meeting NDE requirements, this shift will provide a framework to sustain continuous improvement across all grade levels.

The district is encouraged to broaden the academic goal to include all students. While the Targeted Improvement Plan is instrumental in guiding specific improvements, it is recommended that the district maintain a connection to the TIP within the broader strategy, without relying on it as the primary goal. A districtwide approach will help foster growth for every learner and provide a more comprehensive measure of success.

Improvement Goal 2 Increase use of technology and instructional strategies to improve teaching and improve student's preparedness for life beyond Mead Public Schools.

Commendations:

- Implementation of the District's Technology Plan
- An active tech team that has specific action steps identified
- Teachers Teach Teachers for technology PD
- In-services dedicated to Canvas, PowerSchool and Planbook
- Digital media class for student technology application and HAL

The district has made great strides with the implementation of the District Technology plan created after the Cognia® visit in 2022. The district showcased increased student productivity (Standard #2), students were using technology for research (Standard #5), as well as students engaged in computer sciences through app creation/coding (standard #7). These examples were seen in the classroom observations by team members.

Mead promotes teacher leadership in technology use through their tech team and their action steps, as well as with their Teachers Teach Teachers PD

program. Professional development with tech focuses on fundamental platforms that help with student learning and communication with stakeholders (Powerschool, Canvas, Planbook). Many of these tech sessions are led by members of the tech team. The tech team also addresses staff needs and requests through the use of Google forms and works with administration to meet staff and student technology needs.

The district has also included new initiatives with a Digital Media course and HAL program. Digital Media (Standard #3) allows students to access and create digital media to help communicate. The class has been used to create multiple forms of media, including videos used to help the external review team gain insight to the district's processes. The district has also used the ESU #2 RESTORE grant to start a HAL program, furthering student access to tech related opportunities.

Recommendations:

- Continue to expand Teachers Teach Teachers.
- Demonstrate how the technology standards are incorporated into classroom instruction.

To further continue improvement in the use of technology, the district is encouraged to expand on the Teachers Teach Teachers PD program. The focus on fundamental tech platforms has created a process for learning that many staff members communicated was effective. Expanding this opportunity to include other tech successes that teachers have found will help grow this process within the district.

Additionally, providing examples and demonstrating how tech standards can be incorporated into the classroom would benefit educators' technology skills and efforts, further supporting implementation of the technology plan that Mead currently has in place.

Improvement Goal 3 Develop and implement an induction and mentoring plan for new teachers.

Commendations:

- Commitment to and the creation of an induction/mentoring plan for new teachers
- Reduction in teacher turnover in recent years
- Positive experience for new staff

Mead Public Schools has taken a proactive approach to the teacher shortage facing many schools in America. By creating and committing to a district-wide mentoring program, MPS has had some success in retaining new teachers. Regular meetings with local mentors have resulted in a reduction in teacher turnover in recent years. The mentoring program was also cited in interviews and surveys as a positive experience for new staff. This proactive approach to obtaining and retaining new staff should be applauded.

Recommendations:

- Formalize your mentoring plan.
 - Dates for meetings (time of the year)
 - Topics to review
 - Take Time to Celebrate!
- Once you have formalized the plan, consider a method to evaluate its ongoing success.

While many great strategies are included in the action plan for this goal, formalizing the mentoring process would be a recommended next step to ensuring full implementation. Setting dates for monthly meetings and topics for discussion each month that center around upcoming events (PT conferences, testing, holidays, spring craziness) would help provide momentum and sustainability. Make sure you also take time to celebrate with your new people as education is not an easy place to be right now. Once you have things formalized just a bit, consider how you might evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

Summary

The district is commended on

- preparing and sharing a comprehensive district data profile well in advance of the external visit so that the external team had adequate time to review and prepare
- providing an opening presentation that showcased highlights of the 5-year improvement cycle, the commitment of the district's educators, and the opportunities and support provided for students
- hosting a welcoming external visit and addressing the needs and requests of the external team
- embracing the spirit of continuous improvement

