

Standard 1: Vision and Purpose

Standard: The school establishes and communicates a shared purpose and direction for improving the performance of students and the effectiveness of the school.

Description—The team noted how the school met the intent of the standard based on the preponderance of evidence:

The Sioux County Schools' mission statement and continuing improvement plan were developed through the efforts of its staff, administration, and school board. The SCS mission statement reads: SCS is a student centered environment with a mission to provide knowledge through innovative educational resources while developing each student's confidence to impact the future.

The mission statement and continuing improvement plan can be found posted at the entrance of each school, in the individual classrooms, and at locations on the town's Main Street. Parental stakeholders see them at the start of every school year when they receive their back-to-school packets, which includes the school handbook. All stakeholders in the district currently receive a monthly newsletter, which includes not only the mission statement and the continuing improvement plan, but also describes efforts that are occurring or have occurred. The newsletters are well received by the community; the stakeholders enjoy knowing what is going on in the school and how their tax dollars are being spent. Finally, the school's website, Twitter, and its electronic highway sign further inform the stakeholders of the district's mission and vision. The website clearly defines expectations for student learning and shares school district's vision with external stakeholders. These three additions reach not only stakeholders but also visitors to our community, and those who may be looking to move to Harrison.

The district has developed a comprehensive strategic plan for the school system. Our focus in developing the plan was on the students: What can we do to best effect their learning in and out of the classroom? We looked at various areas such as: technology, staff development, curriculum, and the environment. The plan included changes over the past few years and goals that will be achieved within the next several years.

The school system is actively engaged in a multi-pronged approach to maintain and develop a profile of the school, its students, and the community. The school's electronic sign, located at the intersection of two highways, displays school and community events. The school website and Facebook page not only allow stakeholders to know events happening in the schools and classrooms, but also give these same stakeholders a means to contact a teacher. The monthly newsletter includes upcoming events, descriptions of past classroom and extracurricular activities, notes from the administration, and other relevant information. Parents and students can access Powerschool to check on attendance and grades. ESU 13's Moodle feature allows

individuals to examine what students are learning for various classes. In order to simplify communication, all students and staff have a school email with a generic naming pattern (first initial, last name@siouxcountyschools.org).

Part of the school district's mission statement directs teachers "...to provide knowledge through innovative educational resources..." Keeping this in mind, the school embarked on a multi-year multi-pronged technology development program. The school has incorporated a 1:1 laptop program many years ago and continues to update student and staff laptops. The district purchased iPads to be used by students and faculty at the elementary and high school when needed. The district has purchased laptops for all students in grades 5-8 to use at school. Students in grades 1-4 use iPads. The wireless infrastructure in all buildings has been updated to meet the needs of the twenty-first century classroom.

The staff at Sioux County Schools incorporates the District's Mission Statement, continuing improvement goals, strategic plan and the state standards when designing instruction and learning activities for the students. Teachers attend workshops hosted by the Educational Service Units to enhance skills and to eliminate deficiencies in their teaching practice. Before attending any field trip, teachers explain which state standards will be covered. Teachers must also demonstrate how the activity will impact student learning.

Weekly, the high school students and staff meet for 10 minutes to explore the concepts of leadership, character, and service and how to demonstrate these ideals. Students and staff discuss how it relates to their lives, whether in the past or present. To reinforce positive ideas the administration chose one theme to focus on for the year. Students and staff are given a t-shirt with the annual theme printed on it. The 2019-20 theme is: The Days You "Don't Want To" Are the Days "You Need To".

At the suggestion of one of the staff members we have drawn inspiration from a program known as Mission Mondays <http://www.missionmonday.com/>. The goal of the program is to inform, inspire, and equip students, school staff, and communities with a plan to positively impact the school climate.

Strengths—The district has noted several successful practices deserving of recognition:

*The continuity of the staff. Many of the district's teachers have been employed for more than ten years, some as many as thirty years, or more.

*The administration is devoted to professional, as well as personal development of its staff.

Both the superintendent and the principal have directed group discussions of selected books, such as *Mindset* by Carolyn Dweck, *Talent is Overrated* by Geoff Colvin, *FOCUS* by Mike Schmoker, *Lessons Learned from the Classroom* by Hal Urban, *On Writing Well* by William Zinser, and *The Elements of Style* by William Strunk Jr. and E.B. White.

*There is a strong desire by the students and staff to achieve and not be satisfied with mediocrity. High goals are established by all, which is demonstrated by the fact that our students compete with others at the regional, state and national level, including the National Geographic Geography Bee, the Omaha World-Herald's Midwest Spelling Bee, VFW Voice of Democracy and Patriot Pen (local and state award winners), National History Day (state and national qualifiers), State Speech and Scholastic Art Awards (state and national qualifiers), West Nebraska Arts Center Visionaries Show and District Music competitions, FFA (state award winners).

*There is a strong stakeholder support base for academic and extracurricular activities. Events involving our students are well attended by not only family members but the community at large.

Opportunities—The district offers the following for improvement and growth in this standard area.

*The district, on its own and in conjunction with local government, needs to look for ways to increase student enrollment.

*The district needs to increase involvement by individuals outside of the school when developing district-wide programs, such as the continuing improvement program and strategic planning.