

SOUTH BRUNSWICK DISTRICT GOALS 2016-2017

#1- SELF REGULATION

Note: This is a continuation of the past year's SR goal, which emphasized awareness and skill building. The focus next year will be on student behavior.

Goal Statement:

By May 2017, students will demonstrate an increased awareness of the importance of and ability to self-regulate their own learning/behavior as measured by responses to educator-posed questions regarding self-regulation, such as: *What motivates you to achieve your goals? How do you stay focused on a task? When you need help, what do you do? How do you keep track of your progress?*

Rationale:

Effective learners are self-regulating; analyzing task requirements; setting productive goals; and selecting, adapting, or inventing strategies to achieve their objectives. These learners also monitor progress as they work through the task, managing intrusive emotions and waning motivation as well as adjusting strategies processed to foster success. These are the students who ask questions, take notes, and allocate their time and resources in ways that help them to be in charge of their own learning (Paris & Paris, 2001). Self-regulated learning strategies help to prepare learners for lifetime learning and the important capacity to transfer skills, knowledge, and abilities from one domain or setting to another.

#2- LITERACY AND DYSLEXIA

Note: This is a continuation of this past year's literacy/dyslexia goal, which focused on screening processes, strategies and technology interventions.

Goal Statement:

By May 2017, the SBSB will reflect on progress towards meeting the NJ Dyslexia laws, and continue its mission to become a Dyslexia Friendly District. This will include:

- Review of school initiatives completed in 15-16, via written summary or presentation
- Mandated training (2 hours) K-8 with an emphasis on creating a dyslexia friendly classroom including technology to support students with dyslexia
- Identification and implementation of best practices for K-8 with exploration for 9-12
- Examination of the elementary screening process with an extension to MS and HS including the creation of a guide detailing the process K-8

Rationale:

In September, 2014, NJ passed 3 laws related to Dyslexia that require 2 hours of training related to Dyslexia for appropriate school personnel; screening for any child who shows indicators of dyslexia or reading disabilities early - by the end of the first semester of second grade, with further comprehensive assessment and interventions to follow; and finally, Dyslexia is now identified in the NJ Special Education Code of Law under the classification category of Specific Learning Disability.

Currently, research shows that approximately 20% of all students are dyslexics, and that early intervention can greatly increase success for such students. Those who are dyslexic may experience difficulty with learning letters and sounds, decoding words, reading comprehension, written expression, grammar/mechanics, spelling, and rapid word retrieval. Strengths for these students may include: verbal communication, visual arts, computer science, design, drama, electronics, mathematics, mechanics, music and/or sports.

Dyslexia is a learning disability that impacts all areas for learning; therefore, teachers, specialists, general education and interventionists need to be better equipped to meet the needs of these learners. Furthermore, because Dyslexia is not a disability that "goes away," the entire K-12 community needs to be aware of interventions and strategies that make it more likely for the

Dyslexic student to achieve to his/her greatest potential.

#3- WELLNESS OF THE COMMUNITY

Note: This is a merging of goals from this past year: physical and mental wellness. The latter has taken on increasing importance and is identified by parents, students and staff as a pressing need.

Goal Statement:

By May 2017, the SBSB will develop and implement the 2nd phase of a wellness plan to directly and positively impact faculty, staff, and students. The plan will include wellness education, support programs, screenings and activities designed to engage the South Brunswick School District community to improve health overall of students and staff.

Rationale:

Chronic **physical illness** and poor health interfere with work productivity and learning. By keeping faculty, staff and students healthy, the South Brunswick School District will benefit from lower expenses, higher productivity and better overall health.

When **mental illness** is addressed in a positive proactive manner, students thrive. With the stigma in society surrounding mental health, it is necessary to have open dialogue about helping and connecting individuals to resources and supports in the community. An increasing number of students are coming to school with difficulty managing their emotions and challenged in regulating their responses to daily life situations. Without mental wellness, students face difficulty learning in the classroom and building positive relationships.

#4- SUPPORT FOR UNDER-PERFORMING LEARNERS

Note: This is a merging of three goals from 2015-16: At Risk Students, English-Language Arts Audit, and the Reconceptualization of Space.

Goal Statement:

The SBSB will continue to address the social, emotional, behavioral, and academic needs of underperforming students through the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework. The work will include the following actions:

- Analyze Student Support Team cases with a focus on subgroups
- Build skill set and capacity of staff through PD and discussions on best classroom practices and alternative/creative use of physical classroom space
- Build shared ownership of the RTI process through education on roles of RTI and SST and on collaborative efforts
- Identify and use data to make decisions at the school level
- Determine if we can shift RTI to Tier I, Tier II, Tier III
- Study ELA survey results, literature review, and audit findings to identify changes that will help us to better support at-risk subgroups of students

Rationale:

We have familiarity with the term “at risk” to describe students/subgroups who are considered to have a higher probability of underperforming or failing academically. In SBSB this means Black, Hispanic, White, ELL, and students who come from low socio-economic backgrounds.

As a district with a conscience, we want to be better informed and prepared to meet the increasing demands of the growing diversity in our student population. Research suggests that not only do relationships matter more for at-risk learners, but also that strategies and supports can be put in place. The RTI framework supports this goal as it provides high quality instruction and

interventions matched to student needs, monitors progress frequently to make adjustments, and applies student response data to decision making.

#5- DATA MINING: ANALYSIS AND COACHING

Note: This is a broadening of last year's data goal (creation of school-based Data Teams and education on data mining protocols) to meaningfully connect data work with other goal areas.

Goal Statement:

By May 2017 school year, the school-based Data Teams will engage in data mining and explore commonalities and patterns in existing data as related to other district goals. Essential questions will guide the work behind this goal. Examples: *What type of data can be used to understand and promote the goal of Wellness? How do you measure Self Regulation?*

Rationale:

With all of the data we have, we need to look more deeply, beyond cause and effect, to find patterns and relationships between variables in specific data. The patterns, associations, or relationships among this data can provide information, which can be converted into knowledge about historical patterns and future trends. Then, we can develop evidence-based statements, and action plans to improve student and staff learning environments.

#6- TECH 2016-17: PRESENCE AND PRACTICE

Note: The 15-16 Tech Goal was completed; the "technical" aspects of BYOD, Social Media and Acceptable Use were implemented. The Tech Goal this year is an "adaptive" next step.

Goal Statement:

By May 2017, staff will learn how to develop and create an online presence through PD, model practices and guide-on-the-side" support.

Rationale:

Using the essential question, "How do we come together as a school community around social media?" we are going to prompt students to take increased responsibility for their cyber selves in various ways including:

- Increased use of BYOD and Social Media by students through staff PD and sharing of the best ongoing classroom practices (story telling)
- Staff, student and parent membership on the district Social Media committee
- Staff, student, and parent guidance on moving forward with the use of social media tools and BYOD
- Potential student involvement in posting on social media for the school community (ex: grade-level student council president combined with an "introverted" techie)
- Inclusion of this goal in the District 3-Year Tech Plan
-

#7- RETHINKING HOMEWORK: MOVING FROM STUDY TO ACTION

Note: The modest homework goal from 15-16 (review of practice) took on increasing momentum, as the subject of homework became a "hot topic" in SBSB and beyond. This year's goal will move from study to action with an eye on tending to the whole child and focusing largely on grades 5-12.

Goal Statement:

Based on the findings from the 2015-2016 SBSB homework study, we will identify short and long-term action steps that we will operationalize during the 2016-17 school year.

These steps will include the following:

- Aligning grading practices 5-12
- Setting of fluid but smart boundaries on homework
- Identifying ways in which Google Classroom can be used consistently and effectively to improve student success while reducing student stress
- Based on the book study of Cathy Vatterott's *Rethinking Homework: Best Practices that Support Diverse Needs*, identifying and sharing additional best practices
- Engaging staff in PD and discussions around the embedding of identified and valued best practices into the school day (e.g. self-regulation strategies, technology solutions, etc.)
- Implementing 2-4 district-wide, family-friendly occasions that shift the focus from IQ to EQ (emotional quotient)

Rationale:

Our work will be informed by the words of Robert Marzano and Debra Pickering in “The Case For and Against Homework,” *Educational Leadership*. “If relying solely on research is problematic, what are busy practitioners to do? The answer is certainly not to wait until research ‘proves’ that a practice is effective. Instead, educators should combine research-based generalizations, research from related areas, and their own professional judgment based on firsthand experience to develop specific practices and make adjustments as necessary. Like medical practitioners, education practitioners must develop their own ‘local knowledge base’ on homework and all other aspects of teaching. Educators can develop the most effective practices by observing changes in the achievement of the students with whom they work every day.”

#8- VERTICAL & HORIZONTAL ARTICULATION: GRADES 5-12

Note: Last year, positive vertical cross level conversations were put into motion. In year two, there will be a specific focus on content and instructional practices—horizontal and vertical.

Goal Statement:

The SBSD will expand its efforts with regard to articulation between grades 5-12 to ensure continuity and alignment in curricula and instructional practices. Potential actions will include:

- Cross level PD
- Subject-specific articulation sessions (sharing of best practices)
- Cross level curriculum development (e.g. elementary science curriculum development with secondary partners)
- Walk-throughs by content supervisors and teacher partners between schools and levels
- Content-specific, cross level observations by supervisors of instructional strategies
- Opportunities for horizontal articulation across the 5th grade level teachers (job alike) and between MS and HS teachers who teach the same courses

Rationale:

The change in expectations that students experience in transition between schools and grade levels needs to be gradual and more seamless. Students have difficulty recognizing and adjusting to the differences in practices with regard to conceptual understandings, problem solving skills, process skills, homework, and time management.

#9- CULTURAL COMPETENCY: ACCESS FOR ALL

Note: As this goal moves into year two, the Cultural Competency Goal Committee will merge its work with the District Diversity and Equity Committee so that efforts are targeted and committees are working in tandem.

Goal Statement:

The SBSD will continue to explore and share best practices and strategies that result in more

culturally responsive teaching with particular emphasis on approaches to diversify accelerated settings at the ES, MS and HS.

Rationale:

Using cultural knowledge, prior knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them; it teaches to and through the strengths of these students (Gay, 2000).

Across the district, African-American and Hispanic students continue to comprehensively underperform when compared to peer sub-groups. In addition, these students are over-represented in special education. Dwelling on the disproportionately poor academic performance of certain students, or determining that it is only a result of their families and/or social class backgrounds is not helpful when attempting to reverse the achievement trends of these students. Improving the school achievement of students of color who are currently not performing well requires comprehensive knowledge and high pedagogical skills.

Culture is at the heart of all we do in the name of education (curriculum, instruction, assessment, administration). Even without being conscientiously aware of it, culture determines how we think, believe, and behave, and in turn, how we teach and learn.

#10- CLIMATE: CHARACTER EDUCATION

Note: The original “Climate” goal focused on safety and security. The work of this Goals Committee was completed with two recommendations moving forward: (1) the review of safety/security procedures become an annual action, and (2) a different “area” of climate be selected for emphasis each year. In addition, the committee believes that more work needs to be done in the broad area of climate for our at risk students. Therefore, the goal has been recast to be inclusive of Character Education (core values, citizenship and current programs) w/focus on at-risk students who need alternative approaches.

Goal Statement:

By merging with the SBSB Character Education initiatives, we will seek to take a more proactive approach to meeting the needs of students who are both at-risk and who may need an alternative approach with regard to behavior beyond our current approaches. Actions may include:

- Identify ways/strategies/approaches that bridge from Responsive Classroom, Developmental Designs, and Strive for Five to alternative, proactive measures for students who need differentiation
- Examine Restorative Justice Practices through study and possible workshops
- Search for and identify an Advisory Plan for the middle school
- Continue to strengthen our approaches (RC, DD, S45) through scholarship and training
- Continue the annual review of all safety and security procedures

Rationale:

In order to access academic learning, students need to have a safe and caring environment. South Brunswick has a character education approach at all three levels, which has yielded success in the structured areas. However, we still have concerns for those students who still do not demonstrate good citizenship despite intentional teaching of core values.