

Buchanan High School: Creating A Community of Learners

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Table of Contents

Overview.....1

Buchanan
SIG Plan.....1

Community
Pride.....1

iPad
Student Survey.....2

Accomplishments.....2

Transformational
Model Status.....2

Student
Performance Data.....3

Honors & Awards.....4

Summative
Findings.....4

Recommendations...4

Contact
Information.....4

“So outstanding teachers and principals, a common mission, a culture of high expectations – that’s what it takes to turn a school around.”

-President Barack Obama, March 4, 2011

Overview

The U. S. Department of Education has created *Section 1003(g) School Improvement Grants (SIG)* for the lowest-performing schools that demonstrate the greatest need for aid. Schools that apply for funding must demonstrate a strong commitment to substantially raise student achievement.

Buchanan SIG Plan

Buchanan Community Schools was awarded \$1.3 million by the state of Michigan in September, 2010 through the federally-funded *School Improvement Grant (SIG)* program. This three-year grant included a *Transformational Model* for Buchanan High School. The *Strategic Planning Committee* of the school partnered with the *Berrien Regional Educational Service Agency (RESA)* to aid in implementing the various grant components.

Key Features of the Buchanan SIG Plan

- Professional development for staff in content areas and technology
- Instructional coaches in Math, English Language Arts, Science, student assessment & technology
- Upgrades to the Media Center, computer labs, & Enrichment Lab
- Media carts with sets of iPads
- Increased instructional time through extension of the school day
- Student opportunities for before and after school learning
- Student graphing calculators
- Additional technology staff to support teaching & learning
- School Counselor for at-risk students
- Bus transportation for after-school instructional programs
- Credit redemption programs for students
- Assessments to gauge student needs, performance and growth

Community Pride



Buchanan High School students exemplify the very best about a learning community. Their athletic spirit group, “The Herd” achieved the ultimate fan status given by the *Michigan High School Athletic Association*. They competed in and won the *Battle of the Fans II Competition*, being crowned state champions at the *Michigan State University Breslin Center* in February, 2013. The award is given based upon the criteria of school spirit, student participation, positive sportsmanship, cheer originality, and student leadership.

This award came about through the hard work and tireless efforts of not only the students, but the entire Buchanan community, “the small town with the big heart”. Generations of “Bucks” showed their community pride in supporting their high school team. Elementary students joined in the festivities along with parents and grandparents of the community waving their “Buck Power” spirit towels, singing along, and chanting, “Welcome to the woods” and “Herd dat”. More than 4,522 Facebook supporting votes were generated by the Buchanan community during the competition, 63 more than the town’s total population. This exemplifies the community of Buchanan’s support for their schools, and their now officially recognized best student cheering section in the state of Michigan. This example of community engagement has strong carry over to the pride in which the community also supports the academic achievement of their schools.

iPad Student Survey

In 2013, Buchanan High School students were asked to provide feedback on their experience with using iPads and other available technologies for learning. Summary results of the electronic survey include:



- 283 students from grades 8-12 answered the survey
- 178 of 228, or 78.5% noted that they use an iPad in one or more class periods of the day while at school
- 94.1% or 207 students used the iPads at school for research and information gathering
- 59.6% or 131 of the students utilized the iPads for group work and writing activities while in class,
- 45% or 99 students said they used the iPads at school for problem solving activities
- 90.3% or 205 students had access to a computer at home for learning
- 46.3% or 105 of the students also having an iPad for use at home
- while, 26.9% or 61 students regularly checked out an iPad from school for use at home
- availability of iPads at home was noted as a problem for 39.5% or 88 students
- with availability of iPads at school noted as a problem for just 16.90% or 36 students
- 58.0% or 113 students said that having an iPad at both home and school would be better in meeting their educational goals
- Overall, 83.9% or 193 students said the iPad was helpful to their school experience, with
- 82.1% of the students noting their iPad experience as successful, and
- 82.8% or 189 students characterizing their iPad learning experience as enjoyable

Accomplishments

During the 2010-2013 grant period, evidence exists to confirm the following *SIG* accomplishments:

- School Improvement team composed of department heads, principal and assistant principal
- Rubric established for use of student data in teacher evaluations
- Financial rewards for teachers based upon student MEAP performance in ELA/Writing, Math and Science
- School counselor available one evening per week

- Freshman advisor position in place
- Media specialist monitored the *Positive After School Solutions (PASS)* program
- *Read Naturally* offered as an afterschool program and during the day
- Instructional coaches hired for ELA and mathematics
- Purchases completed for media carts (i.e. document cameras, digital projectors & laptops)
- PLAN and EXPLORE assessments utilized in grades 7-10
- Credit recovery program is in place during and after school (*Education 2020*)
- Applied for and granted 20 minutes of additional daily instructional time by the state 2010-2011 to implement *Professional Learning Communities (PLC's)*
- Scheduling software utilized for February parent conferences
- Parent meetings held for both incoming freshmen and current *BHS* students to discuss scheduling
- Hip-Hop, Zumba and Yoga classes made available as community outreach
- Professional development for teachers included: *Reading Apprenticeship, Common Core Standards, Interactive Multimedia Presentation Systems (IMPS), Google docs, calendar & G-mail, & RTI training*

Transformational Model Status

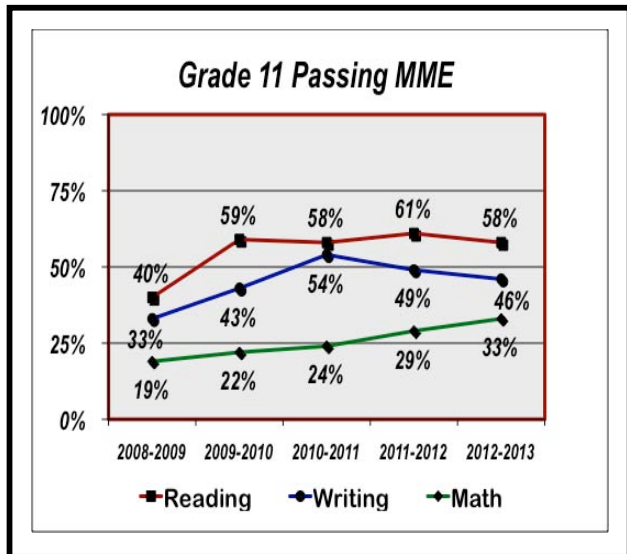
Buchanan High School has successfully met or exceeded all 12 of 12 or 100% of the state and national transformational model objectives of the grant.

Transformation Model Requirement	Status
1) Replace the principal	Met
2) Use of student data in teacher/leader evaluations	Met
3) Evaluations designed with teacher/principal involvement	Met
4) Remove staff who have not increased achievement	Met
5) Provide on-going professional development	Met
6) Offer incentives for career growth & flexible work conditions	Met
7) Implement instructional program aligned with state standards	Met
8) Promote continuous use of student data	Met
9) Increase learning time for all students	Met
10) Engage families and the community	Met
11) Provide operational flexibility (e.g. calendars, schedule, budget)	Met
12) Ensure technical assistance provided (i.e. Berrien RESA)	Met

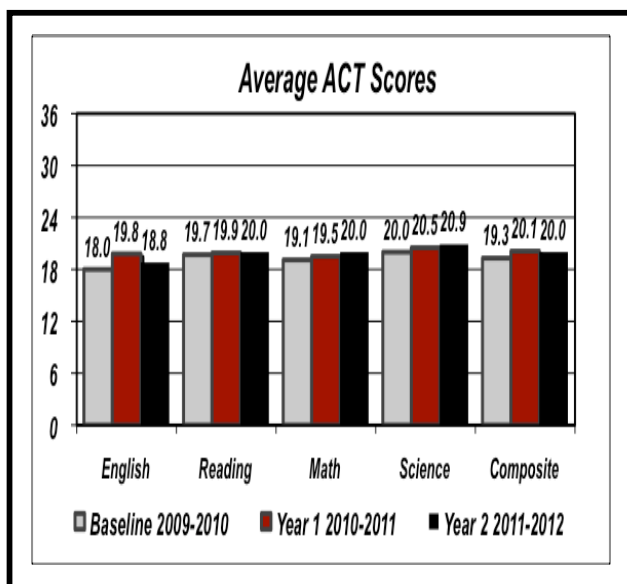
Student Performance Data

Results and findings for Buchanan High School for 2012-2013, the 3rd year of the *School Improvement Grant (SIG)* program are found below:

- Buchanan High School students continued to show academic growth and improvement in years 1-3 of the grant, with



- an 18% gain in reading scores from 40% to 58%
- a 13% gain in writing scores from 33% to 46%, and
- a 14% gain in math scores from 19% to 33%
- thus, showing a consistent improvement trend across all areas of the MME

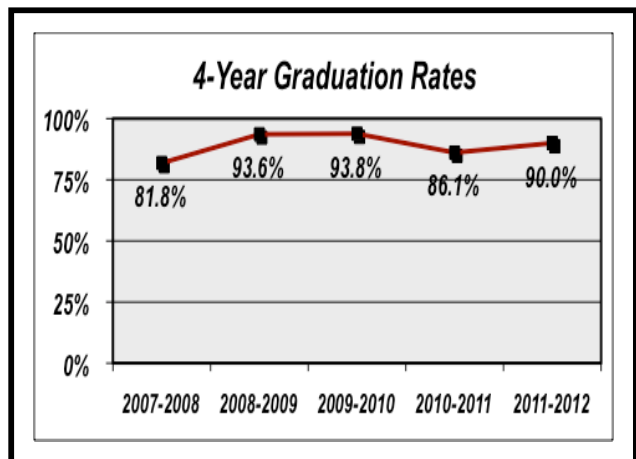


Buchanan High School students also improved on the ACT college entrance examination with

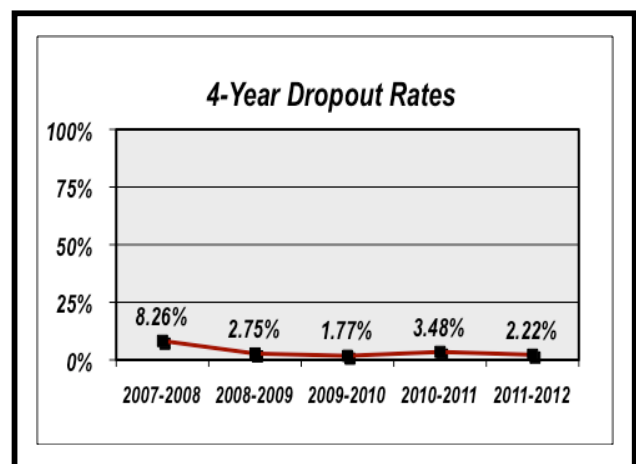
- average scores in English increasing from 18.0 to 18.8

- average scores in Reading increasing from 19.7 to 20.0
- average scores in Math increasing from 19.1 to 20.0
- average scores in Science increasing from 20.0 to 20.9, and
- the average composite scores increasing from 19.3 to 20.0
- also sustaining an improvement trend across the ACT examination subtests and composite score

Graduation and dropout rates also showed significant improvement through the years of the grant, with



- graduation rates for the 4-year cohort group of students rising from 81.8% to 90.0% or higher, and



- the average the number of dropouts decreasing from 8.26% of the 4-year high school cohort group to a mere 2.2%
- again, exhibiting a consistent pattern of students earning credits towards graduation and a reduction of students at risk of dropping out of school

Honors & Awards



Buchanan High School has achieved the following honors and awards during the 3-year implementation of the School Improvement Grant (SIG):

- Met all *Adequately Yearly Progress (AYP)* federal *No Child Left Behind* criteria
- Received an A letter grade under *Michigan's Education YES!* program
- Was noted as a *Michigan Beating the Odds* school by outperforming 30 most demographically similar schools in the state
- Ranked #1 high school in Berrien County on Michigan's public school *Top to Bottom Rankings* list for 2011 with a percentile ranking of 93, 11th place in the state

Summative Findings Year 3

Analyses and interpretation of evaluative data linked to the School Improvement Grant (SIG) performance objectives resulted in the following findings for 2013, the third year of the program:

- Confirming evidence exists from multiple data sources to verify that substantial progress has been made in the areas of student achievement and program implementation, including the state and federally required transformational model objectives

Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided by the independent external evaluator for consideration by the leaders and staff of *Buchanan High School*:

- 1) *Faculty Use of Data*
Continued effort is needed in having teachers utilize available and existing student data to make informed decisions about teaching and learning on a regular basis to improve performance
- 2) *Technology Utilization & Learning*
Additional resources are necessary to provide staff with the professional development and technical support necessary to fully implement available technology to provide the ultimate learning environment for students, staff and community

Contact Information



Michigan Department of Education
Section 1003(g) School Improvement Grants
<http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-5236-238570--,00.html>



U. S. Department of Education
Office of School Turnaround
School Improvement Grants

<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/sif/index.html>



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