

Schenectady City Schools

Strategic Plan

Task Force Reports:

Core Instruction

Literacy

Targeted Academic Programs

Data Analysis

Learning Environments



Certified Copy
May 6, 2009

Task Force Final Report: Section A

Task Force:	Date:	Facilitator(s):
#1 Core Instruction	May 6, 2009	Matt Weinheimer & Tonya Federico

Members:	<p>Joanne Veglia (French teacher), Danielle Bouton (math/technology coordinator), Christopher Chank (dean in FA house at SHS), Daniel Brudos (4th grade teacher), Susan Gorman (principal of Fulton), Andrea Polikoski (instructional coach), Tony Farina (dean at CPMS), Claire Godlewski (remedial math teacher), Jonathan Goyette (math teacher), Jacque Barkenhagen (parent), Ray Ruby (Regional School Support Center), Lori Strong (College of St. Rose), Ron Hamelin (World Language/ESL coordinator), Dianne Tanner (science teacher), Gayle Cole (instructional coach), Kate Hamlin (instructional coach)</p>
Charge:	<p>To comprehensively audit and analyze student achievement in English, math, science, social studies, and world languages Pre-K-12. Investigate curriculum alignment and effectiveness of instruction. Task Force will identify needs in curriculum and instruction in the core areas based on achievement data and the task force investigation.</p> <p>Need to establish data review before first meeting.</p>

Internal Analysis (Strengths and Weaknesses)	
Content:	Math
Area:	Assessments
Strengths:	97% passing Algebra Regents at MS level, 3 rd -6 th grade NYS math making AYP, Increasing 6 th -8 th performance
Weaknesses:	55% passing Algebra Regents at HS level, 48 % passing Math B Regents at HS level, 6 th & 8 th NYS math: not all making AYP, Special education subgroup not making AYP (district), Low income subgroups not making AYP (district), Performance of subgroups other than white, not low-income (district)
Content:	Math
Area:	Curriculum, EDM: Pre-K-5 th , Glencoe: 6 th -8 th Algebra, Geometry, Trigonometry, Statistics, Pre-Calculus, IB: Math Methods & Studies, Applied: Algebra (2-year Regents course) & Geometry
Strengths:	Every Day Math (EDM) is short/condensed spiral, EDM develops critical thinking, Strong student engagement: manipulatives, hands-on, games, Parent letter to support EDM, Glencoe scope & sequence aligned to NYS standards, Glencoe available and shared on T-shared, Glencoe vertically aligned, Offer multiple approaches at HS (pace, structure)
Weaknesses:	Belief that EDM is weak in basic skills, Glencoe horizontal alignment

Content: Math

Area: Instruction

Strengths: Offers multiple strategies for different learners, MS AIS structure (reduced class size, extra instructional period)

Weaknesses: PD for new teachers in EDM (how to incorporate basic skills instruction), Staff misunderstanding of multiple strategies, Parental misunderstanding of multiple strategies, Lack of alternative instructional structures for teachers at elementary (classroom teacher vs. remedial math), Night school at HS (smaller class size), Inconsistency in teachers' instructional practices in MS (concept vs. procedural), Is there a significant difference in EDM and Glencoe instructional approaches that impacts student learning?

Content: World Languages

Area: Assessment, 8th grade proficiency, Regents exam, Commencement level exam, Arabic/Chinese

Strengths: 98 % 8th grade French proficiency, 98% 8th grade Spanish proficiency, 100% passing HS French Regents, 98% passing HS Spanish Regents

Weaknesses: Lack of proficiency & Regents exams currently in place for all language offerings, Small # taking proficiency (129), 65% IB passing rate French SL, 78% IB passing rate Spanish SL

Content: World Languages

Area: Curriculum

Strengths: Chinese and Arabic offered at 5th & 6th, Available curriculum in French & Spanish

Weaknesses: Opportunities for offerings of all languages in all buildings, Not knowing externally established proficiencies/standards, Existence & alignment of elementary curriculum in Arabic & Chinese, 7th & 8th grade curriculum is not articulated in concepts and content

Content: World Languages

Area: Instruction

Strengths: Bringing cultural perspective & strengths of exchange teachers, Engaging instruction & immersion into whole culture (not just language)

Weaknesses: Is there a difference in language instruction (elem vs. MS & HS), push in vs. separate class? Exchange teachers' instruction adapting to US classrooms/school structures/etc., Shallow pool of certified teachers, Structures/scheduling/space can inhibit cross-curricular understanding

Content: Social Studies

Area: Assessment

Strengths: 5th & 8th scores increased, Global went up about 2%, US History went up almost 10 percentage points to 91%.

Weaknesses: 63% passing rate for Global Studies Regents, Special ed. population results are significantly below, ELL population results are significantly below, 10th grade SS exam (2 year test) doesn't count toward AYP. However, 65% passing rate is needed, and students are not achieving it.

Content: Social Studies

Area: Curriculum

Strengths: Flexibility of scheduling AIS instructional courses, ELA & Reading coordinators support use of non-fiction texts, Maps, globes, and graphs for grades 1-5 with resources, Comprehensive social studies maps grades K-6 have been developed

Weaknesses: Curriculum is developed in isolation and not integrated, At secondary level, skills such as compare/contrast, note-taking and cause/effect are not being taught effectively., Teachers need training/practice to use non-fiction texts, Elementary teachers need content material available to them for integration, Due to curricular connections, third grade and sixth grade level need opportunity for vertical planning, along with fourth and fifth, Missing opportunity to expose kids to world communities.

Content: Social Studies

Area: Instruction

Strengths: Good at teaching organizational structure of writing, Skills needed for the exam are being taught to students, analysis of documents, Pockets of schools that focus on social studies instruction at elementary level, Resources to develop instructional strategies are available in coaches & coordinators, Teaming at middle schools is successful, 4th, 5th, 7th, & 8th grade is teaching skills, AIS is being at high school.

Weaknesses: At elementary level, social studies is not stressed in same manner as math and ELA. At secondary level it is an exit exam students need to pass, Knowledge is not constructed; information is presented, Social studies is deemed to be a content driven subject, Teachers don't understand developmental writing skills of students. Integration has to be understood and developed. Students need to use voice, Departmental exchange of ideas and support is lost with house system at high school level, Teaming, vertically and horizontally, doesn't occur consistently from Pre-K through 12.

Content: Science

Area: Assessment

Strengths: 92% passing science 4 (51% with a 3 and 41% with a 4), 63% passing Science 8 (45% with a 3 and 18% with a 4), 4th and 8th grade NYS science making AYP, Increasing 8th grade performance

Weaknesses: Special education subgroup not making AYP (district), Low income subgroups not making AYP (district), Performance of subgroups other than white, not low-income (district), 65% passing Living Environment Regents, 59% passing Earth Science Regents, 50% passing Chemistry Regents, 62% passing Physics Regents

Content: Science

Area: Curriculum

Strengths: STC kits for K-7, Strong horizontal alignment at elementary level, Supplemental curriculum binders for individual units in STC Kits, Strong student engagement: manipulatives, hands-on, games, 6-8 science curriculum aligned to NYS standards, SHS science courses aligned to standards, SHS curriculum committee developed/is developing curricula for SHS, SHS science materials available and shared on T-shared, Offer multiple approaches at HS (pace, structure)

Weaknesses: K-6 teachers feel there is not enough time to go through STC kits, Quality vs. quantity, Lack of technology at the k-6 level to compliment curriculum, Curriculum noncreative, Vertical gap between grades, No clear “scope and sequence” or curriculum map.

Content: Science

Area: Instruction

Strengths: Offers multiple strategies for different learners, Professional development available, Vertical team and horizontal team meeting at the middle school level, Subject teachers at SHS meet to discuss instruction strategies, SHS teachers integrate technology very well

Weaknesses: Staff misunderstanding of multiple strategies, Parental misunderstanding of multiple strategies, ELA and math take precedence over science, Lack of technology at K-5 level, Lack of “scope and sequence” and curriculum map, Teachers teaching multiple courses in multiple rooms, Inability to work in room for traveling teachers, Failure of grade level meeting and district meeting for K-6, Many K-6 teachers are not science certified.

Content: ELA

Area: Assessment

Strengths: Elementary students have been meeting AYP, small “N” in subgroups, English 11 Regents 72% are b/w 65 & 100%.

Weaknesses: 50% of students 3-8 reaching proficiency, Students with disabilities & ELL results are significantly below.

Content: ELA

Area: Curriculum

Strengths: K-12 curriculum mapping is currently taking place, Literacy framework is developed, Core curriculum map is developed & will be shared at professional development., Middle school & HS piloting co-teaching strategies and literacy across content areas
Many programs being piloted throughout the district include: Balanced Literacy, Good Habits/Great Readers, Houghton Mifflin, Scott Foresman, Wilson, Read 180, Early Success, Fast ForWord

Weaknesses: None

External Analysis (Opportunities and Threats)

Area: Demographic Trends

Opportunity: Diversity in population-multicultural instruction in social studies, ELA, and world languages, Aging baby boomer population is creating a change in career trend and second jobs

Threat: Greater ELL need, Transient population, Increase in single income or non-parental guardian families, Low socio-economic status, Growth of school district (lack of space)

Area: Economic Variables

Opportunity: GE resurgence in turbines, AMD in Saratoga, Growth of businesses in downtown area, Cultural businesses are approved by city, Housing stock in Hamilton Hill area is improving

Union and Schenectady County Community College are improving programs and attracting students who are spending money

Threat: Decrease in tax base, Loss of state aid, Current state of economy, Decreasing amount of grant funding available

Area: Parent/Community Demands & Special Interest Associations

Opportunity: Supportive groups that partner and provide programming for schools (KAPL, ROAR, GE, Junior League), Arts individuals/groups (Proctors) promote working partnership Albany County Chamber would like to link up with businesses/middle schools, Tutoring programs (Union, Boys & Girls Club, YMCA, COCOA House), Awards & scholarships

Threat: Gang violence, Funding sources are spread thin--less giving of financial resources from local groups, Lack of parental interest and groups

Area: Regulations (Federal & State)

Opportunity: State and federal mandates of curriculum and programming, Regulations have created greater awareness, Funding sources

Threat: Overlapping/conflicting legislation, District In Need of Improvement (DINI) status year 2 creates little funding and huge burden of paperwork, Increasing AYP means larger percentage of a district or more districts in improvement categories, a “general anesthesia attitude” results, Non-funded mandates, Certification restrictions, SHS designation as a Persistently Dangerous School

Area: Educational Trends

Opportunity: Restructuring of Math, Technology, Graduation requirements

Threat: Increasing tuition rates & decreases in financial aid, Technology

Area: Available Candidates

Opportunity: Transitional certification

Threat: Certification restrictions decrease pool of qualified candidates

Our Critical Issues: (Include all)

1. What successes have we realized, by content area, according to NYS Standards and Assessments?
2. Which variables under our control show areas of the greatest gains or needs in student achievement, according to NYS standards and assessments?
3. Have we pursued the best available research on the above variables?
4. Is the curriculum available and shared among staff?
5. Is the curriculum aligned both vertically and horizontally?
6. Is the curriculum aligned with state standards and assessments?
7. How effectively do we differentiate instruction for our students’ learning?
8. What are the most effective instructional practices for special education and ELL students?
9. Has the district developed effective instructional supports for at-risk students?

10. How can professional development support instruction that focuses on increased student achievement?

Task Force Final Report: Section B Strategic Intent and Key Initiatives Summary

Strategic Intent #1

By June of 2014, 80% of students will pass the Algebra, Living Environment or Earth Science, English, Global Studies, and U.S. History and Government Regents exams on their first attempt; a further 15% of students will pass these Regents exams by graduation; the remaining 5% of students will meet the graduation requirements through completion of alternative assessments.

Key Initiatives (# each)

1. We will develop and implement a plan to address teacher professional development needs to raise content specific knowledge, and a system to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of PD.
2. We will develop a plan to secure and retain highly qualified staff (schedule, protocols, recruiting).

Strategic Intent #2

By June of 2014, 95% of students in grades 3-8 will reach proficiency or be counted as proficient based on their growth on required NYS assessments.

Key Initiatives (# each)

1. We will develop and implement a plan to address teacher professional development needs to raise content specific knowledge, and a system to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of PD.
2. We will develop a plan to secure and retain highly qualified staff

Strategic Intent #3

By June of 2014, 100% of students Pre-K-12 will receive instruction by teachers competent in implementing research-based strategies that promote active student engagement.

Key Initiatives (# each)

1. We will develop and implement a staff development program focused on research-based instructional strategies, and a system to evaluate the effectiveness of Professional Development and implementation of instructional strategies in the classroom.

Strategic Intent #1

By June of 2014, 80% of students will pass the Algebra, Living Environment or Earth Science, English, Global Studies, and U.S. History and Government Regents exams on their first attempt; a further 15% of students will pass these Regents exams by graduation; the remaining 5% of students will meet the graduation requirements through completion of alternative assessments.

Key Initiative #1

1. We will develop and implement a plan to address teacher professional development needs to raise content specific knowledge, and a system to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of PD.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		1.1	Draft core curriculum maps for all core content areas (7-12).	
2009-2010		1.2	Establish a planning team to look at current PD needs focusing on raising teachers' content specific knowledge and exploring ways to meet these needs.	
2009-2010		1.3	Investigate ways of scheduling a minimum of 1 hour a week vertical meeting time for all core areas at the HS to be implemented the following year and continue current vertical team scheduling at the MS.	
2009-2010		1.4	Recruit same subject area and building location (assignment level when possible) mentor for each teacher new to the district.	
2009-2010		1.5	Investigate the scheduling requirements to establish horizontal teaming for all 9 th graders including the scheduling of common planning time to be implemented the following year.	
2009-2010		1.6	All teachers new to the district, grade level or a content area will participate in ongoing, content-specific professional development throughout the school year	
2009-2010		1.7	Enhance instructional leadership by providing professional development to principals and other administrators focusing on professional learning communities.	

Key Initiative #2

2. We will develop a plan to secure and retain highly qualified staff (schedule, protocols, recruiting).

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		2.1	Establish a hiring schedule that would allow the district to compete effectively with other districts in the area.	
2009-2010		2.2	Foster and maintain relationships with local colleges that allow the district to hire staff under the internship certificate program.	
2009-2010		2.3	Grant administrative staff that is responsible for hiring access to on-line resources for recruitment.	
2009-2010		2.4	Automatically advertise for critical shortage area positions on OLAS when an opening occurs.	
2009-2010		2.5	The district will continue to take steps to maintain its current exchange programs with China and Spain.	
2009-2010		2.6	The district will pursue establishing an exchange program/visiting teacher program with Arabic-speaking countries.	
2009-2010		2.7	The district will advertise critical shortage area positions through appropriate college placement offices.	

Strategic Intent #2

By June of 2014, 95% of students in grades 3-8 will reach proficiency or be counted as proficient based on their growth on required NYS assessments.

Key Initiative #1

1. We will develop and implement a plan to address teacher professional development needs to raise content specific knowledge, and a system to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of PD.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		1.1	Complete development and implementation of core ELA map.	
2009-2010		1.2	All teachers new to the district, grade level or a content area will participate in ongoing content-specific professional development throughout the school year (Balanced Literacy Framework, TPRS, Everyday Math, STC Kits).	
2009-2010		1.3	All teachers will be afforded the opportunity to have initial and ongoing professional development in order to implement and maintain research-based best practices in their content area.	
2009-2010		1.4	Establish a structure and process for Pre-K-6 teachers to meet at least once a month both vertically and horizontally for development of professional learning communities.	
2009-2010		1.5	Enhance instructional leadership by providing professional development to principals and other administrators focusing on supporting professional learning communities.	
2009-2010		1.6	Develop an ongoing evaluation tool to determine the effectiveness of PD for teachers.	

Key Initiative #2

2. We will develop a plan to secure and retain highly qualified staff

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		2.1	Establish a schedule to identify hiring needs by February 1 st of each year to begin hiring by March 1 st of each year and complete processing of candidates by April 30 th of each year to secure highly qualified staff.	
2009-2010		2.2	Establish a minimum number of college course credits in literacy courses for elementary education candidates.	
2009-2010		2.3	Develop selection criteria consistent with the beliefs of the district's strategic plan for new potential hires (implement year 2).	
2009-2010		2.4	Develop a recruitment outreach program for the critical-shortage subject areas. (We host student teachers and graduates.)	
2009-2010		2.5	Establish exit interview or other exit process for those teachers who leave to determine the reason(s) for resignation (e.g., mentors, feedback from admin).	

Strategic Intent #3

By June of 2014, 100% of students Pre-K-12 will receive instruction by teachers competent in implementing research-based strategies that promote active student engagement.

Key Initiative #1

1. We will develop and implement a staff development program focused on research-based instructional strategies, and a system to evaluate the effectiveness of PD and implementation of instructional strategies in the classroom.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		1.1	A team will establish a protocol to evaluate the effectiveness of current instructional strategies and practices, apply the protocol, and make recommendations based on findings.	
2009-2010		1.2	Continue to foster an ongoing relationship with local colleges and universities to bring current research-based instructional strategies into our schools.	
2009-2010		1.3	All teachers will be afforded the opportunity to have initial and ongoing professional development in order to implement and maintain research based instructional strategies that promote active student engagement.	
2009-2010		1.4	Instructional leadership of principals and other administrators will focus on effective teaching with an emphasis on active student engagement.	
2009-2010		1.5	Utilize instructional coaches and literacy coaches to model and support implementation of research-based instructional strategies that promote active student engagement within the classroom.	
2009-2010		1.6	Develop a process to encourage peer-coaching and collaboration to foster a community where professionals learn from each other as a model for students.	

Task Force Final Report: Section C Summary and Conclusions

Task Force:	Date:	Facilitator(s):
Core Instruction	May 6, 2009	Matt Weinheimer & Tonya Federico

The Core Instruction Task Force was comprised of five subject areas: ELA, mathematics, science, social studies, and world languages. The group established strategic intents, key initiatives, and action plans that supported these subject areas. We fully support the class size reduction initiatives in the current plan and recommend they continue.

Data on various NYS assessments were analyzed in order to develop appropriate strategic intents and key initiatives. In addition, we assessed current professional development practices and how high quality professional development can lead to effective instructional strategies which ultimately translate into higher student achievement.

Two of the three Intents dealt with increasing proficiency in the five core subject areas while the third intent targeted creating effective instruction through staff development.

The district is committed to developing and retaining high quality teachers. Looking at the hiring process is an integral first part of finding high quality teachers.

In addition, the drafting and eventual adoption of core maps in all core content areas is critical in order to establish a consistent system.

Research-based teaching strategies are imperative to increasing student achievement. The task force recommends ongoing and effective professional development in these strategies.

Task Force Final Report: Section A

Task Force:	Date:	Facilitator(s):
#2 Literacy	May 6, 2009	Alison Taylor & Julie Heller

Members:	Danielle Bouton, Serena Butch, Linda Cintula, Kerri D’Alessandro, Laurie DiCaprio, Connie DuVerney, Susan Fitzgerald, Julie Foster, Susie Gibbs, Kate Hamlin, Becky Hudak, Karen Kirstein, Jackie Orr, Kathy Lupi, Kristen Majkut, Liz Mark, Sheila Meade, Paula Metzner, Mary Milford, Patty Papuzza, Gary Putman, Shari Hoffman, Susie Walsh, Diane Wilkinson, Heather Wells
Charge:	<p>The goal of this task force is to create a balanced literacy framework that encompasses current research in the areas of reading, writing, listening, and speaking from both a teaching and a learning perspective. This literacy framework will shape our students’ early development of the critical skills necessary to be independent and thoughtful learners throughout their lives.</p> <p>The task force should explore pertinent research and specifically consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal mapping of ELA curriculum at all grade levels • Best practices used in other successful districts • Materials and texts currently used to support best practices • Baseline data and current in-district successes • Assessment procedures and tools • Consistent and early identification of at-risk students • Intervention practices and their impact • Literacy across the content areas <p>Professional development for parents, administrators, all teachers, librarians, and support staff</p>

Internal Analysis (Strengths and Weaknesses)

Area: Organizational Flexibility

Strength: Developing openness to new ideas and approaches, Willing to explore and change schedule structures, Vertical teams

Weakness: Limitations imposed by teaching day, Limited embedded professional development because of schedules, Tight control of technology, Lack of exposure and use of current research in education, Too many failed and not thoroughly researched initiatives, Size of district, Traditional approaches, Inconsistency between buildings of application of teacher contract

Area: Culture

Strength: Range of experience, New teachers with new ideas and current literacy training

Weakness: Isolation and reluctance to let go of historical approaches, Exchange of ideas and practices, Growth of buildings, Turnover of staff, Weakened sense of community, Lack of diversity among faculty, Lack of motivation (of students to learn and of teachers to keep up with current research and try new practices)

Area: Best Practices/Instruction

Strength: Balanced literacy framework, Literacy and instructional coaches, Presently piloting core literacy and assessment programs to lead to better decisions for the district, Increased time for collaboration at the middle school level, Middle school weekly lesson plans focusing on literacy, special ed., and ELL strategies

Weakness: AIS Remedial Reading criteria and level of service need to be established across the schools within the district, Special education needs to be included in AIS services, Lack of teacher understanding of best practices (they don't see the value of changing old practices), Need expository writing course for all 9th grade students, Support for focused intensive early intervention, Lack of time for collaboration especially at the elementary and high school levels, Breakdown of communication, Lack of school and district common culture, Lack of trust in the expertise of consultants, Need curriculum for literacy workshops and scheduling by ability level, Special education often falls through the cracks

Area: Curriculum Maps

Strength: Literacy framework, Professional development days focused on curriculum mapping district-wide

Weakness: Lack of techpaths licenses for all teachers and administrators, Lack of consistent teaching across content areas and grades that mapping would address

Area: Accountability

Strength: State test data presented to BLTs, departments, and middle school vertical teams, Data department (Karen Duggan and Susie Gibbs), RTI and AIS regulations, ELA audit leading to additional accountability and pd focus on literacy

Weakness: Presentation and availability to teachers, Isolation of classroom teachers, Access to test history data for all teachers, Professional development for how to use accountability data is needed, No specific system for holding teachers accountable for student learning, Lack of understanding of RTI and AIS and who is responsible

Area: Resources

Strength: On-staff expertise with literacy coaches and instructional coaches, Book rooms, Task force, Increase of technology resources (SmartBoards, ELMOs, LCD projectors, laptop carts) Libraries and librarians

Weakness: Intimidation by technology, Systematic technology training, The need for more equipment in classrooms, The need for more relevant and appropriate texts (in alternate formats, also) that students can take home with them, The need for the balance of teacher expertise across the district, The need for more leveled texts across all content areas, The need for a uniform assessment in literacy, Teachers need to know how to use book rooms/leveled texts effectively, Part-time elementary librarians restrict utilization of resources

Area: Collaboration

Strength: Horizontal and vertical teams in the middle schools, Middle school literacy coaches work with the vertical teams and classroom teachers, Elementary literacy coaches work with classroom teachers

Weakness: Need for co-teaching training and planning, Inconsistent grade level meetings (some schools have none), Large high school house meetings, Disparity of team meetings at the high school, No consistent contact between elementary/middle and middle/high school teachers, Lack of full-time elementary librarians restricts collaboration and ability to utilize resources, Need training to make team meetings productive, Clearly articulated purposes established for meetings, Need more special ed. coaches and literacy coaches at the high school level, Need research requirement for grades 3 and up to increase collaboration and writing skills, Need more across-grade-level planning time for elementary teachers

Area: Staff Development

Strength: More focused on literacy, Three days in August of workshops, Literacy and instructional coaches, New resources such as laptop carts create excitement and opportunity for staff development

Weakness: Teachers need time for conversation and reflection, Balancing after-school and in-school time, All embedded staff development time is not used effectively, Coordinators and principals need to plan staff development together, Coordinators and principals need to be in attendance at staff development events, No literacy or instructional coaches at the high school, Different funding resources decrease the continuity, Coach roles need to be clearly defined, A portion of instructional coach time is used for non-instructional purposes, Inconsistent follow-through of PD

Area: Leadership

Strength: Developing teacher leaders, Administration is becoming more involved

Weakness: Principals need to visit classrooms more, All administration and staff need to be invested in new initiatives and should be working together, Coaches need to deliver the same message and philosophy in regard to literacy across the district, Sometimes the message is not understood and is misconstrued

Area: Communication

Strength: Conversations are beginning, Letting go of the closed-door approach, Top administrators are seeking input, Literacy coaches are accessible, superintendent's weekly newsletters, some school/community activities provide for more communication

Weakness: Many are unaware of task force and its members, Too many initiatives make message to teachers unclear, All teachers are not hearing the same message, Not enough time at the elementary level for effective communication and conversation

Area: Decision-Making

Strength: Strategic Planning Committee

Weakness: Unclear boundaries regarding administrators and who is responsible for what, Those with a vested interest need to contribute to the decision-making process, Lack of understanding of best practices by those making the decisions

Area: Technology

Strength: Infrastructure, Improvements in computer to student ratio, TEAM IT- On- site support, Network support, Core team of instructional technology specialists, Numerous supporting grants to help augment funding for technology, Existing funding that is stable and integrated into budget

Weakness: Canned programs not optimal, Resources are not equally distributed and are inconsistent across buildings, Cohesive vision, Defined roles, Communication, Follow-up of existing purchases for evaluation and validation

External Analysis (Opportunities and Threats)

Area: Demographic Trends

Opportunity: High levels of diversity, Diversity is changing rapidly, Increase in cultures that appreciate education and have parent involvement, Inspiring educators to learn about other cultures, Gentrifying community, Property values are increasing, Decrease in transient population, Specific human services programs targeting areas in Schenectady e.g. Born Learning

Threat: High levels of diversity, Meeting needs of diverse populations with different cultures and languages, Increase in families with adults who have low literacy skills even in native language, Since 2000, the city has experienced a high influx of Guyanese immigrants, Growing percentage of Schenectady households with children under age of 18 are headed by single parents and/or grandparents (many parents work multiple jobs and are less available to be involved in the community, Grandparents, many on fixed incomes, are spending retirement years raising children, Communications from school are difficult for some parents to understand

Area: Economic Variables

Opportunity: Federal and state aid

Threat: School tax formula, Economic crisis, Potential freeze of school funds and/or retraction of state funds

Area: Research/Best Practices

Opportunity: Pilot programs, District literacy coaches, Contract for Excellence, RTI

Threat: Need structures at all levels for teacher conversations and embedded staff development, Adopting a core program that does not address the needs of our diverse population

Area: Research of Other Urban Districts

Opportunity: National Urban Alliance, Visits to other urban districts with documented successes, e.g. Rosa Parks School, San Diego, CA

Threat: Politically sensitive, Overwhelming to draw too many comparisons

Area: Parent/Community Needs

Opportunity: Expertise available, Closer working relationships between school and community, Community organizations are eager to work with schools on behalf of children

Threat: Decrease in funding for community programs, Cultural and educational barriers prevent parent involvement

Area: Special Interest/Associations

Opportunity: CELA, Phi Delta Kappa, NYSRA, NYSEC/NCTE, NYSUT, Local colleges

Threat: Teacher unions

Area: Regulations: Federal and State

Opportunity: One unified Student Data Base, High Standards, Growth Model, Accountability, SINI/DINI

Threat: Emphasis on testing, NCLB-unfunded mandates, Merit pay, SINI/DINI, Conflicting and changing regulations for SPED and ELL

Area: 21st Century Perspective

Opportunity: Globalization, Technology trainings, Highly skilled and motivated librarians

Threat: Globalization, Lack of understanding, ½ time librarians at the elementary level

Our Critical Issues: (Include all)

1. What resources do we need to support the development of literacy leadership teams, to train administrators as literacy leaders, and to implement effective literacy instruction across all grade levels and subject areas?
2. What are the research-based instructional strategies we should be using to support effective literacy instruction across all grade levels and subject areas?
3. How does the district provide time and support for embedded professional development in the area of literacy instruction?
4. How are we using data, including common formative assessments and state assessments, to inform effective literacy instruction across all grade levels and subject areas?
5. What is our plan for sharing information, increasing conversation, and developing relationships between parents, community members, and faculty as literacy partners?
6. What role should technology play in the literacy development of our students?

Task Force Final Report: Section B Strategic Intents and Key Initiatives Summary

Strategic Intent #4

By June 2014, the percentage of students reaching a level of proficiency on the New York State standardized assessments in ELA will increase by 25% for students in grades 3-8 and for students taking the English Regents exam.

Key Initiatives (# each)

1. We will include a body of literacy strands (reading, writing, listening, speaking) that are coordinated with each discipline's identified content, skills, and essential questions K-12 in 100% of the subject-area core maps (English, science, social studies and math).
2. We will have the agreed-upon range of resources necessary for effectively teaching and assessing the literacy of our diverse learners and the tools necessary for transforming these resources into alternative formats.
3. We will develop a system for identifying and organizing literacy leadership teams in each building, and, as an extension, a district literacy leadership team.
4. We will develop and implement a defined sequence of consistent, systematic, and systemic literacy trainings in an effort to increase the instruction of literacy as a core subject across all content areas and grade levels.

Strategic Intent #4

By June 2014, the percentage of students reaching a level of proficiency on the New York State standardized assessments in ELA will increase by 25% for students in grades 3-8 and for students taking the English Regents exam.

Key Initiative #1

1. We will include a body of literacy strands (reading, writing, listening, speaking) that are coordinated with each discipline’s identified content, skills, and essential questions K-12 in 100% of the subject-area core maps (English, science, social studies and math).

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		1.1	Discuss literacy strands with teachers of all subject areas and teachers at all levels.	
2009-2010		1.2	Identify literacy strands in the NYSED standards for each discipline and at each grade level.	
2009-2010		1.3	Create a collection of possible connections, plans, and opportunities for increasing literacy strands in each subject area.	
2009-2010		1.4	Train subject-area coordinators and members of curriculum committees in the use of curriculum mapping software.	

Key Initiative #2

2. We will have the agreed-upon range of resources necessary for effectively teaching and assessing the literacy of our diverse learners and the tools necessary for transforming these resources into alternative formats.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		2.1	Identify the necessary resources at each grade level and for each content area	
2009-2010		2.2	Create a system for evaluating the validity, applicability, and appropriateness of these identified resources.	
2009-2010		2.3	Create and offer professional development opportunities for using the identified resources to teach literacy.	

Key Initiative #3

3. We will develop a system for identifying and organizing literacy leadership teams in each building, and, as an extension, a district literacy leadership team.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		3.1	Research effective systems for developing literacy teams.	
2009-2010		3.1	Create a committee to identify literacy leadership teams.	
2009-2010		3.1	Identify roles and responsibilities of these teams.	
2009-2010		3.1	Present these teams to each building's faculty.	
2009-2010		3.1	Provide training for literacy leadership teams.	

Key Initiative #4

4. We will develop and implement a defined sequence of consistent, systematic, and systemic literacy trainings in an effort to increase the instruction of literacy as a core subject across all content areas and grade levels.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		4.1	Review recent teacher surveys and identify which needs have already been met.	
2009-2010		4.2	Review building schedules to identify possibilities for embedding professional development time within the course of the school day.	
2009-2010		4.3	Make changes to the mentoring program that allow for literacy training for new teachers in lieu of some of the other meetings.	
2009-2010		4.4	Develop a systematic way for literacy coaches to work consistently in all buildings and with all teachers, including Schenectady High School and the Career Center at Steinmetz.	

Task Force Final Report: Section C Summary and Conclusions

Task Force:	Date:	Facilitator(s):
Literacy	May 6, 2009	Alison Taylor & Julie Heller

The members of the Literacy Task Force reviewed the district’s ELA Audit Action Plan, current ELA data, and the findings from the original Literacy Task Force that convened in 2007-2008 to begin our exploration of the district’s strengths and weaknesses in regard to literacy for the Strategic Planning Committee. After several meetings and many discussions, we identified our charge and critical issues. Research on the critical issues led us to the development of our strategic intent and four key initiatives. Each key initiative is related to increasing our number of students reaching proficiency on New York State’s ELA exam in grades 3-8 and the high school English Regents exam. The Literacy Task Force members created first year action plans for each key initiative to move the district forward in the development of curriculum maps, securing agreed-upon resources, establishing literacy teams, and providing systematic and systemic literacy trainings across all content areas and grade levels. All recommendations put forth from the Literacy Task Force are designed to increase students’ literacy learning across all content areas and to create independent and lifelong learners.

Task Force Final Report: Section A

Task Force:	Date:	Facilitator(s):
#3 Targeted Academic Programs	May 6, 2009	Ann Jackson & Paul Scampini

Members:	Julie Barber, Mark Blanchfield, Dave Clark, Megan Coon, Suzanne DeWald, Patricia Embree, Melissa Hughes, Ann Jackson, Ilene LaMalfa, Meghan Libertucci, Mary Matthews, Kim Monaco, Judy Morales, Christina Newell, Amelia Nardone, Bernadette O'Brien, Heather O'Leary, Peter Parisi, Karina Pascht, Gary Putman, Jerry Rosen, Nancy Sagendorf, Paul Scampini, James Schneider, Sara Scott, Sharon Sherman, Sharon Stevens, James Thomas, Fran Vargas, Polly VanNostrand, John Whitney, Douglas Williams
Charge:	To investigate all programs that target the needs of learners with unique abilities and challenges. The task force will reevaluate current district programs being used to assist the targeted students. In addition we will specifically identify research-based best practices in an effort to identify strengths and gaps and recommend both improvements to existing programs, and the implementation of new programs.

Internal Analysis (Strengths and Weaknesses)	
Area:	Organizational Flexibility
Strength:	Course offerings at HS (options)
Weakness:	Alt Ed options needed: not every kid is able to do traditional HS
Area:	Conducive Environment
Strength:	Commitment of District to programs (FA, IB, etc.), Some good family involvement, Fabulous teachers, After school programs
Weakness:	Elementary enrichment opportunities, Courses block access to IB, AP, Disruption of schedule for those in Young Scholars Program
Area:	Best Practices and Instruction
Strength:	Beginning the process of curriculum mapping
Weakness:	Lack of continuity Elem, MS, HS, Lack of continuity school to school, Feeder school experiences, Reading Instruction
Area:	Quality Standards
Strength:	None
Weakness:	Interventions need to start at MS/Elem

Area: Accountability

Strength: Good Scores on NYSESLAT in Listening and Speaking
(avg. attaining Adv/Prof =81)

Weakness: Poor scores on NYSESLAT in Reading and Writing (avg. attaining Adv/Prof=49),
Progress monitoring all programs

Area: Collaboration

Strength: None

Weakness: Utilizing families for support

Area: Staff Development

Strength: None

Weakness: Consultant vs. co-teaching model – tracking and teaming and scheduling

Area: Communication Flow

Strength: None

Weakness: Parental Involvement, Communication of what is available

External Analysis (Opportunities and Threats)

Area: Demographic Trends

Opportunity: None

Threat: Do the teachers have the tools they need to do enrichment in class? Families under stress and lack resources

Area: Economic Variables

Opportunity: Donation sites

Threat: Transportation, Inequity of family resources (as simple as buying IB books)

Area: Parent/Community Demands

Opportunity: None

Threat: Commitment to amount of work, Transient population, Lack of access to enrichment activities

Area: Special Interest/Associations

Opportunity: Use of community resources RPI/Union, etc.

Threat: None

Area: Educational Trends

Opportunity: Odyssey of the Mind possible as part of after school program, Expand day for enrichment (passion time), Sign up for classes/ workshop depending on interest, Summer for enrichment vs. punitive: must be fun, High school could be inclusive of study, special ed. interest workshops

Threat: None

Our Critical Issues: (Include all)

1. Do we have a well-developed, comprehensive plan (pre-K–12) for gifted/talented academic programming?
2. How can we restructure the Young Scholars Program (elementary gifted/talented programming) so that we service more students and better meet their needs (role of differentiated Instruction, instructional coaches with G/T and at-risk)? Do we restructure Young Scholars or consider changing the overall elementary program?
3. How can we integrate the concepts of Response to Intervention more extensively throughout the district (systemic change)?
4. How does AIS fit with RTI? IS the AIS system structured enough to support the requirements of RTI?
5. How can we better meet the needs of our culturally and linguistically diverse students in need of remedial programming?
6. How can we address the disproportionate representation of ethnic subgroups in advanced academic programs?
7. What are the current alternative ed. options and where are the gaps?
8. What are the current special ed. options and where are the gaps (i.e.: co-teaching issues)?
9. What are our after school and summer school options/opportunities? Are there any for enrichment?

Task Force Final Report: Section B Strategic Intents and Key Initiatives Summary

Strategic Intent #5

By June 2014, increase graduation rate of students identified with a disability by 20%.

Key Initiatives (# each)

1. We will assure services and supports are provided within the general education setting through the establishment of a 'Response to Intervention' (RTI) process.

Strategic Intent #6

By June 2014, 70% of Students with a disability will be served in the general education setting as defined on the NY State report (80% or more time spent in general ed. and currently 38.6%).

Key Initiatives (# each)

1. We will assure a continuum of service be available in District with the intent that there be easier movement/flow of students to Least Restrictive Environment as they are able and not based on artificial grade, year levels.
2. We will assure curriculum and instruction expectations for special education classrooms mirror the general education setting.
3. Provide services within district classrooms and programs to meet needs of students who traditionally would be sent out to BOCES and/or other agencies.
4. Build on successful PBIS (Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports) program to assure students with special needs are provided appropriate behavioral supports to benefit from learning environments.

Strategic Intent #7

By June 2014, students participating in Academic Intervention Services (AIS) will increase performance on the English Language Arts (ELA) and math tests, increasing the aggregate number of students performing at the 3-4 level by 20%.

Key Initiatives (# each)

1. Assure individual building Academic Intervention Services (AIS) plans are meeting the instructional needs of the students (modalities).

Strategic Intent #8

By June 2014, the average number of students performing in the advances/proficiency levels of the Reading and Writing sections of the NYSESLAT will increase to 80% (currently 49%).

Key Initiatives (# each)

1. We will provide curriculum resources and staff development that will assist in student achievement and appropriate transition into and out of English as a Second Language (ESL) services.

Strategic Intent #9

By June 2014, we will increase by 15% the number of students from underrepresented subgroups who are enrolled in advanced academic courses/programs, including Young Scholars, middle level accelerated courses, pre-IB/Honors 9th and 10th grade courses, International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP).

Key Initiatives (# each)

1. We will create a comprehensive system for identifying students who demonstrate high academic potential.
2. We will create a comprehensive system for monitoring and supporting the academic progress of students from underrepresented subgroups who demonstrate high academic potential
3. Re-evaluate the current Young Scholars Program and current middle level advanced offerings toward the goal of:
 - A. increasing access for more students
 - B. providing more opportunities for students to receive targeted instruction in their areas of academic strength.
 - C. creating alternative options to the current Young Scholars model which involves students being pulled out of regular instruction for an entire school day
 - D. providing enrichment opportunities to students who may not qualify for the Young Scholars program but would benefit from enriched instruction offering additional accelerated courses at the middle level

Strategic Intent #10

By June 2014, we will increase by 20% the number of students from underrepresented subgroups who successfully complete advanced courses at Schenectady High School. Success is defined as scoring a 4 or higher on an IB assessment (scoring scale of 1-7), or scoring 3 or higher on an AP assessment (scoring scale of 1-5).

Key Initiatives (# each)

1. We will align our advanced academic program curriculum to ensure consistency and continuity of instruction across all levels.
2. We will create a professional development plan that enables IB, AP and pre-IB/Honors teachers from SHS to collaborate with middle level teachers to better align advanced curriculum and instruction between the middle and high school level.

Strategic Intent #11

By June 2014, we will increase by 20% the number of students from underrepresented subgroups who successfully complete requirements for the IB diploma.

Key Initiatives (# each)

1. We will recruit more students from underrepresented subgroups into the IB diploma program and also implement support measures to improve the number of students who achieve the diploma.

Strategic Intent #12

By June 2014, we will increase by 20% (baseline data to be established) the graduation rate of students who enter ninth grade two or more years behind their age appropriate grade level.

Key Initiatives (# each)

1. Develop an intervention/academic support program for grades 7 through 12 that supports identified students through graduation from SHS.

Strategic Intent #5

By June 2014, increase graduation rate of students identified with a disability by 20%.

Key Initiative #1

1. We will assure services and supports are provided within the general education setting through the establishment of a ‘Response to Intervention’ (RTI) process.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		1.1	Establish a leadership team to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ oversee implementation of the Response to Intervention initiative ○ coordinate work between departments ○ incorporate work already being done in district into the appropriate processes and procedures in the Response to Intervention model. 	
2009 - 2010		1.2	Provide staff development on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ appropriate assessment ○ criteria for identification of students who are culturally and linguistically diverse ○ other factors that may impede educational progress that are not achievement based (gender, home circumstances, socio-economic background, and immigrant status). 	
2009 - 2010		1.3	Develop alternatives to suspension for students with and without disabilities	
2009 - 2010		1.3	Identify current interventions being provided by the district. Determine if those interventions meet the criteria of “research-based.”	
2009 - 2010		1.4	Support and strengthen school based support teams at every building as the conduit to implement the Response to Intervention process at the building level.	

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		1.1	Establish a leadership team of building administrators and special education teachers to plan and implement options for providing school services in the least restrictive setting (for example: co-teaching, special class in an integrated setting, consultant teacher).	
2009 - 2010		1.6	Provide appropriate and timely staff development to building administrators and general education classroom teachers on the Response to Intervention concept. Provide staff development to all team members on changes in roles that are expected due to implementation of Response to Intervention.	
2009 - 2010		1.7	Develop resource manuals and materials to assure building teams are consistent in implementation across district.	

Strategic Intent #6

By June 2014, 70% of Students with a disability will be served in the general education setting as defined on the NY State report (80% or more time spent in general ed. and currently 38.6%).

Key Initiative #1

1. We will assure a continuum of service be available in District with the intent that there be easier movement/flow of students to LRE as they are able and not based on artificial grade, year levels.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		1.1	Establish a leadership team of building administrators and special education teachers to plan and implement options for providing school services in the least restrictive setting (for example: co-teaching, special class in an integrated setting, consultant teacher).	
2009 - 2010		1.2	Develop and implement staff development on co-teaching, special class in an integrated setting and consultant teaching	
2009 - 2010		1.3	Develop a description of class programs and services available, including entry and exit criteria.	
2009 - 2010		1.4	Develop a progress monitoring system that reflects on students' achievement at regular intervals.	

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		1.5	Examine how we use the time allotted to work with staff (dept. meetings, ½ days, etc.).	

Key Initiative #2

2. We will assure curriculum and instruction expectations for special education classrooms mirror the general education setting.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		2.1	Implement curriculum mapping and guide teachers on its usefulness for teaching students with disabilities.	
2009 - 2010		2.2	Create modified curriculum based on curriculum mapping project, and map out alternative instruction expectations.	
2009 - 2010		2.3	Build in progress monitoring process to be implemented by special education teacher and provide accountability for adjusted curriculum and classroom viability.	
2009 - 2010		2.4	Facilitate collaboration between special ed. and general education teachers so we provide a more comprehensive, appropriate program for our students	
2009 - 2010		2.5	Work collaboratively with coordinators to ensure that special ed. teachers are included in workshops, training sessions, etc.	

Key Initiative #3

3. Provide services within district classrooms and programs to meet needs of students who traditionally would be sent out to BOCES and/or other agencies.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		3.1	Review and update the current special education plan to provide district-based classroom options for students now housed in BOCES programs.	
2009 - 2010		3.2	Determine resources (staffing, materials, equipment, facilities) needed to provide students an appropriately supportive program in district.	
2009 - 2010		3.3	Determine appropriate classroom models and classroom supports needed to provide an appropriately supportive district program.	
2009 - 2010		3.4	Determine need and implement a plan of staff development for areas such as classroom management, crisis intervention, universal design and responsive teaching.	

Key Initiative #4

4. Build on successful PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies) program to assure students with special needs are provided appropriate behavioral supports to benefit from learning environments.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		4.1	Review and update the current functional behavior assessment process and documents.	
2009 - 2010		4.2	Review and update the current behavior intervention plan process and documents.	
2009 - 2010		4.3	Provide staff development on appropriate assessment strategies and documentation.	
2009 - 2010		4.4	Provide staff development on appropriate behavior intervention plan development and implementation.	
2009 - 2010		4.5	Assess support needed for staff to improve behavioral processes and implement those changes at the classroom level.	
2009 - 2010		4.6	Provide staff development on classroom management strategies for students with special needs.	

Strategic Intent #7

By June 2014, students participating in Academic Intervention Services (AIS) will increase performance on the English Language Arts (ELA) and math tests, increasing the aggregate number of students performing at the 3-4 level by 20%.

Key Initiative #1

1. Assure individual building Academic Intervention Services (AIS) plans are meeting the instructional needs of the students (modalities).

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		1.1	Identify AIS services at each level (elementary, middle and high school) for each subject area (ELA, math, social studies, science).	
2009 - 2010		1.2	Define Academic Intervention Services in terms of “tiers” to allow a tie-in to Response to Intervention implementation.	
2009 - 2010		1.3	Build in daily scheduled time for Academic Intervention Services.	
2009 - 2010		1.4	Utilize school-based support teams to coordinate services and communication.	
2009 - 2010		1.5	Plan for progress monitoring as a part of Academic Intervention Services.	

Strategic Intent #8

By June 2014, the average number of students performing in the adv/prof levels of the Reading and Writing sections of the NYSESLAT will increase to 80% (currently 49%).

Key Initiative #1

1. We will provide curriculum resources and staff development that will assist in student achievement and appropriate transition into and out of English as a Second Language (ESL) services.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		1.1	Test all students identified as culturally and/or linguistically diverse to determine English literacy level, including recent immigrants whose language is English, but whose cultural impact on language creates a “second language” type achievement gap.	
2009 - 2010		1.2	Develop process to assure students with English as a second language will be served in the most appropriate service level.	
2009 - 2010		1.3	Provide access to elective courses with appropriate supports, so students will be able to increase English language skills.	
2009 - 2010		1.4	Work across disciplines to provide meaningful opportunities for collaboration among ESL teachers, classroom teachers and remedial teachers.	

Strategic Intent #9

By June 2014, we will increase by 15% the number of students from underrepresented subgroups who are enrolled in advanced academic courses/programs, including Young Scholars, middle level accelerated courses, pre-IB/Honors 9th and 10th grade courses, International Baccalaureate (IB) and Advanced Placement (AP).

Key Initiative #1

1. We will create a comprehensive system for identifying students who demonstrate high academic potential.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		1.1	Revise the current process that is used for admitting students to the Young Scholars Program to include a multi-criteria approach.	
2009 - 2010		1.2	Evaluate the current system that is in place for recommending students for accelerated classes in middle school and for admission to the pre-IB/Honors program in ninth grade.	

Key Initiative #2

2. We will create a comprehensive system for monitoring and supporting the academic progress of students from underrepresented subgroups who demonstrate high academic potential.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		2.1	Research and explore collaborative partnerships, and visit school districts and organizations that are currently engaged in supporting the academic achievement of underrepresented subgroups.	
2009 - 2010		2.2	Develop a data-driven process for consistently monitoring the academic progress of students from underrepresented subgroups who are enrolled in advanced programs beginning at the elementary level.	
2009 - 2010		2.3	Organize an Advanced Academics Programs steering committee consisting of teachers, counselors and administrators from all levels, and parents, and community members, that will be charged to assist with overseeing advanced academic programs in the district.	

Key Initiative #3

3. Re-evaluate the current Young Scholars Program and current middle level advanced offerings toward the goal of

- A.** increasing access for more students
- B.** providing more opportunities for students to receive targeted instruction in their areas of academic strength.
- C.** creating alternative options to the current Young Scholars model which involves students being pulled out of regular instruction for an entire school day
- D.** providing enrichment opportunities to students who may not qualify for the Young Scholars program but would benefit from enriched instruction offering additional accelerated courses at the middle level

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		3.1	Research and conduct site visits to other K-8 advanced academic programs	
2009 - 2010		3.2	Evaluate the newly developed Student Advancement Program that is now being offered through Capital Region BOCES for possible implementation in the district.	

Strategic Intent #10

By June 2014, we will increase by 20% the number of students from underrepresented subgroups who successfully complete advanced courses at Schenectady High School. Success is defined as scoring a 4 or higher on an IB assessment (scoring scale of 1-7), or scoring 3 or higher on an AP assessment (scoring scale of 1-5).

Key Initiative #1

1. We will align our advanced academic program curriculum to ensure consistency and continuity of instruction across all levels.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		1.1	Reevaluate the current accelerated courses that are offered at the middle level to better align them with instruction that is offered in advanced courses at SHS.	
2009 - 2010		1.2	Submit an application for an Advanced Placement Incentive Grant through the US Department of Education.	
2009 - 2010		1.3	Develop a system for supporting the academic, social and emotional needs of high achieving students from underrepresented groups in grades 6 through 12.	
2009 - 2010		1.4	Provide training to middle school staff on the AP and IB programs offered at SHS.	
2009 - 2010		1.5	Create a professional development plan that enables IB, AP and pre-IB/Honors teachers from SHS to collaborate with middle level teachers to better align advanced curriculum and instruction between the middle and high school level.	

Key Initiative #2

2. We will create a professional development plan that enables IB, AP and pre-IB/Honors teachers from SHS to collaborate with middle level teachers to better align advanced curriculum and instruction between the middle and high school level.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		2.1	Provide training to middle school staff on the AP and IB programs offered at SHS.	
2009 - 2010		2.2	Provide opportunities for middle and high school staff members to work collaboratively.	
2009 - 2010		2.3	Offer professional development opportunities to enhance the competencies, knowledge and skills of elementary and middle school teachers to provide more effective instruction to high achieving students in the regular education classroom.	

Strategic Intent #11

By June 2014, we will increase by 20% the number of students from underrepresented subgroups who successfully complete requirements for the IB diploma.

Key Initiative #1

1. We will recruit more students from underrepresented subgroups into the IB diploma program and also implement support measures to improve the number of students who achieve the diploma.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		1.1	Explore collaborative partnerships with other urban high schools that offer the IB diploma to share best practices.	
2009 - 2010		1.2	Establish a mentoring program to better support students who wish to pursue the IB diploma.	
2009 - 2010		1.3	Design a process for closely monitoring the academic progress of students from underrepresented subgroups who pursue the IB diploma.	
2009 - 2010		1.4	Establish a process for developing positive working relationships with the families of IB diploma students to improve communication and build awareness of the benefits of achieving the IB diploma.	
2009 - 2010		1.5	Develop and implement a system for better informing district stakeholders about the IB program and increase outreach efforts to inform students and families of the long term benefits of pursuing the IB diploma	

Strategic Intent #12

By June 2014, we will increase by 20% (baseline data to be established) the graduation rate of students who enter ninth grade two or more years behind their age appropriate grade level.

Key Initiative #1

1. Develop an intervention/academic support program for grades 7 through 12 that supports identified students through graduation from SHS.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		1.1	Research and conduct site visits of current effective alternative education programs	
2009 - 2010		1.2	Identify current seventh graders who have been retained for at least one grade and are at risk of academic failure for their current grade.	
2009 - 2010		1.3	Develop a system for identifying and monitoring the progress of any student who is retained prior to seventh grade.	
2009 - 2010		1.4	Research and conduct site visits of current effective summer transition programs for possible implementation in the district.	

Task Force Final Report: Section C Summary and Conclusions

Task Force:	Date:	Facilitator(s):
Targeted Academic Programs	May 6, 2009	Ann Jackson & Paul Scampini

This task force charge included reviewing and planning for all programs providing academic support services to students. After initial meetings in which we reviewed the task force charge, developed the critical issues and brainstormed the SWOTs (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), the team broke into three sub groups that allowed us to move forward to work in three identified need areas.

The diverse needs identified in the critical issues suggested the following sub groups:

1. Group 1 focused on support services –including Academic Intervention Services (AIS), special education services, Response to Intervention, and English Language Learners.
2. Group 2 focused primarily on strategies for improving access and success for students from underrepresented subgroups (African American, Asian, Hispanic, Native American) in the district’s advanced academic programs
3. Group 3 focused on improving the graduation rate for students who require alternative education options.

Once we identified these subgroups, we met primarily in these separate work groups between October and February.

Our task force included a cross section of parents, community members, teachers, administrators, and support staff that represented many different educational perspectives. Before beginning the formal planning process, the entire committee carried out an internal and external analysis that evaluated our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. During the planning process, we reviewed current data, consulted outside experts, implemented surveys for key staff, researched current best practices, and participated in extensive discussions that led to the development of the eight strategic intents and fourteen key initiatives. We feel that implementation of these initiatives will have a significantly positive impact on the achievement of students in the different subgroups listed above.

Task Force Final Report: Section A

Task Force:	Date:	Facilitator(s):
#4 Data Analysis	May 6, 2009	Lori McKenna & Sal DeAngelo

Members:	Larry Murphy, Aaron Kingery, Jim Masi, Chris Greco, Karen Duggan, Jim Kehough, Jeannie Myers, Gail Smith, Jenny Vreeland, Princella Learry, Mike Bush, Carl Strang, Rhonda O'Brien, Gary Clure, Jeannine Goodale, Sheila Tebbano, John Mitchell, Stacy Horton, Susie Gibbs
Charge:	To conduct a comprehensive analysis of our data collection processes in the various areas, including but not limited to student achievement, both by content and grade level, financial, personnel, and student support services. Additionally, the Task Force will examine our capacity as a district to gather, track, and represent data longitudinally so that it may be utilized to measure progress, identify successes, and inform decision making.

Internal Analysis (Strengths and Weaknesses)

Area: Accountability

Strength: See Data Warehouse section, Staff has a strong sense and understanding of accountability data

Weakness: Data ownership not clearly defined, No consequences in place for those who do not use with data/information even when available, No formal process (i.e. work order system) to track requests for data, Need to use data for instructional purposes

Area: Business Rules

Strength: None

Weakness: Not clearly understood by stakeholders because there are no formal procedures and/or documentation of standard practices (no procedures manual)

Area: Communication (General)

Strength: Reliable email system, phone (office and cell), website, eNews, Educational Access Channel (TW Cable Channel 17), Inter-office mail, Good technology infrastructure/storage capacity

Weakness: Underutilized

Area: Communication of Data/Results

Strength: Home Access Center (parents), NYstart access/PD, Data/Assessment office works well with instructional as well as administrative staff, Curriculum mapping

Weakness: Lack of defined roles related to communication of data/results, Continuity is sometimes lost with changes in leadership/positions, Changes in procedures and protocols not always communicated to all stakeholders, Need for data to be communicated into the next level

(from elementary to middle to high school)

Area: Collaboration

Strength: Strong at middle school level (vertical/horizontal team meetings), Work with many outside agencies

Weakness: Grade-level meetings are not district-wide, Not enough time provided for collaboration, Need to expand vertical team concept into high school

Area: Data Sources

Strength: Large amount of sources/varieties, Data Assessment office with skilled personnel, Use of electronic grade book at secondary level, Robust student information system, Competent IT professionals on staff

Weakness: Time constraints for reviewing data, Timeliness of availability, dissemination and analysis of data, Lack the ability to track data longitudinally, Difficult to retrieve archived data, Too many disparate sources of information, Inconsistent information types between databases (i.e. grade level), Interpretation not meaningful – information/data is not presented in a user friendly format, Absence of quality standards, No consistent protocol/practice for error detection/checking and correction, No tools available to enable visualization of data, Little documentation of procedures for maintaining databases including backup/disaster recovery, No comprehensive data inventory, No consistent PD on the use/analyzing of information/data, No best practices/consistency for sharing of information, Little advanced programming/database expertise on staff, Access to data by various stakeholders often an obstacle to productivity, Inadequate capacity to effectively “tag” students for a variety of applications, Insufficient staffing to support expansion of data utilization, Environment where data is collected/entered is often not void of distractions, No long-range data plan in place, High school Regents exams need data analysis

Area: Federal/State Regulations

Strength: Data warehouse is in place and is well managed by CIO

Weakness: Difficult to access student information for new students (e.g. NYS testing information, immunizations)

Area: Leadership

Strength: Values the use of data in the decision making process, New leaders being developed with new ideas and knowledge, Veteran leadership provides valuable institutional knowledge/historical perspective

Weakness: Changes in leadership/responsibility over a number of years has lead to some inconsistency of practice, Some ambiguity of ownership/responsibility for information/dissemination among administration

Area: Knowledge Base

Strength: None

Weakness: None

Area: Organization Flexibility

Strength: Committed faculty, administrators and support staff, Organization has some capacity to be agile and change when needed

Weakness: Minimal cross-functional training in many areas related to data collection, analyzing, and submissions

Area: Parents/Community

Strength: New HAC (Home Access Center) Parent Portal

Weakness: Access is limited and could be expanded (e.g. transportation information)

Area: Professional Development

Strength: Good structure in place, (PD Express database for tracking PD for teachers)

Weakness: PD does not specifically address techniques in the analyzing of data/information

Area: Record Management

Strength: None

Weakness: Insufficient process for records management, Protocols need to be established, Lack of staff identified and responsible for records management

Area: Technology

Strength: Excellent technology infrastructure and capacity, Good help desk and technical support available to quickly resolve issues

Weakness: None

External Analysis (Opportunities and Threats)

Area: Demographic Trends

Opportunity: Enrollment increasing

Threat: Overall enrollment increasing, Physical space, Tracking/receiving new students' mandated and required data (e.g. NYS test results), Unclear on how data affects results

Area: Economic Variables

Opportunity: Many opportunities for funding through, grants, entitlements, Contract for Excellence

Threat: Unpredictable economic climate, Decrease in federal and state funding, Insufficient tax collection, Reauthorization of NCLB

Area: Research/Best Practices

Opportunity: Key stakeholders have a vested interest as it relates to school improvement and effectiveness

Threat: Need for more education and training on methods

Area: Like Districts

Opportunity: All doing same thing, Best practice information/sharing/collaboration, Having same issues (e.g. accountability, mobility, poverty)

Threat: May not be honest, Districts using practices that our district doesn't support or approve

Area: Parent/Community Demands

Opportunity: None

Threat: None

Area: Special Interest/Associations

Opportunity: None

Threat: None

Area: Regulations: Federal and State

Opportunity: Data collection, Allows us to use data for other purposes and with other partner agencies, Value-added/growth model, State reporting, Consistent "warehouse" to track and collect information/data, Better data integrity

Threat: Mandates to bureaucracy that become all about themselves, NYSED/federal will continue to use data to punish districts, Negative connotations, Constantly changing regulations and business rules threaten accuracy, Accurate and "clean" data collection resulting in misidentification of schools under NCLB

Area: Educational Trends

Opportunity: Action Research

Threat: NCLB unfunded mandates

Area: Accountability

Opportunity: New growth model-opportunity to refresh understanding, Build capacity in district

Threat: More to learn and understand: people may become confused and turn away, May identify district's lack of planning for initiatives, Lack of follow through on where money is allocated, May show public flaws in district, People will be held to task and answer questions about areas they are responsible for

Our Critical Issues: (Include all)

- 1.** Is the district adequately addressing and insuring data integrity?
- 2.** Are we efficiently and effectively disseminating data?
- 3.** Is the absence of a centralized repository of data (warehouse) or lack of inter-operability of databases prohibiting us as a district from using data to its fullest potential?
- 4.** Is there a better way to insure the usability of data through the creation of tools designed to meet the needs of all stakeholders?
- 5.** Have we accurately established and identified the responsible stakeholders for the collection, maintenance and storage of data through the development and implementation of business protocols?
- 6.** Does the organization have the ability to analyze data effectively (all district stakeholders)?
- 7.** Is the district, effectively and consistently utilizing data to inform decision making in order to meet and maintain student excellence?

Task Force Final Report: Section B Strategic Intent and Key Initiatives Summary

Strategic Intent #13

By June 2014, SCSD will develop and implement standards-based data collection, processing, and management procedures in order to meet or exceed federal and state guidelines.

Key Initiatives (# each)

1. We will develop, document, and publish business rules that are based on accepted standards and that identify human, technological, and other resources. This effort will include ongoing training to all stakeholders and will regularly evaluate these business rules and training processes, and make changes as necessary.
2. When creating a program, grant, etc., we will carefully consider, identify and build capacity for resources required to collect, store and analyze the data, as part of the development of a process.

Strategic Intent #14

By June 2014, we will create and implement an effective governance model for accountability purposes in order to support, enhance and improve instructional and programmatic processes. Data governance (DG) refers to the overall management of the availability, usability, integrity, and security of the data employed in an enterprise.

Key Initiatives (# each)

1. Inventory the data currently being collected and create a document that identifies each data element (its definition, databases, consistency, source, and validation, including who enters it, who uses it, and on what reports, and who else would benefit from seeing it).
2. Create a Data Governance Board (DGB) to: (See Action Plans)
3. Create a Metric Board to: (See Action Plans)

Strategic Intent #15

By June 2014, at least 80% of our SCSD educational staff will have access to and an understanding of timely, relevant, accurate, user-friendly, data for planning purposes and supporting student achievement.

Key Initiatives (# each)

1. We will develop a process that will ensure the proper analysis and presentation of data by creating tools designed to clearly convey appropriate information to meet the needs of all stakeholders.
2. We will establish a Committee for Dissemination of Data (CDD), which will be charged with creating a system to efficiently and effectively disseminate data and/or information garnered from ongoing data analysis.
3. We will create a process that will equip stakeholders to consistently utilize data to inform decision making in order to meet and maintain student excellence.

Strategic Intent #13

By June 2014, SCSD will develop and implement a 100% standards-based data collection, processing, and management procedures in order to meet or exceed federal and state guidelines (Critical issues #1, 3, 4, 5).

Key Initiative #1

1. We will develop, document, and publish business rules that are based on accepted standards and that identify human, technological, and other resources. This effort will include ongoing training to all stakeholders and will regularly evaluate these business rules and training processes, and make changes as necessary.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		1.1	Create an organizational system for the centralized storage and retrieval of documented business rules.	
2009 - 2010		1.2	Identify data being collected, including all mandated information.	
2009 - 2010		1.3	Create business rules for each data element collected. The rules will include the process, responsibility and form of the data collection process and will be documented in the form determined above.	
2009 - 2010		1.4	Determine whether appropriate resources (staff time, environment, training and support) are provided to collect data properly and ensure its integrity in all collection areas based on business rules created.	

Key Initiative #2

2. When creating a program, grant, etc., we will carefully consider, identify and build capacity for resources required to collect, store and analyze the data, as part of the development of a process.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		2.1	Create document to express the importance of data integrity and the district standards involved so that program managers/planners are aware of the role of data in their programs.	
2009 - 2010		2.2	Develop a protocol/requirement to review data collection requirements for grants and programs prior to implementation in collaboration with Federal/State and Data Assessment Departments.	
2009 - 2010		2.3	Identify district resources that the program managers and planners can use to expedite the process of data collection.	

Strategic Intent #14

By June 2014, we will create and implement a 100% effective governance model for accountability purposes in order to support, enhance and improve instructional and programmatic processes (Critical issue # 5 and 6). Data governance (DG) refers to the overall management of the availability, usability, integrity, and security of the data employed in an enterprise.

Key Initiative #1

1. Inventory the data currently being collected and create a document that identifies each data element (its definition, databases, consistency, source, and validation, including who enters it, who uses it, and on what reports, and who else would benefit from seeing it).

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		1.1	Create a project team.	
2009 - 2010		1.2	Identify a project manager within the project team.	
2009 - 2010		1.3	Create a project plan and identify project objectives.	
2009 - 2010		1.4	Create a communication timeline and identify the person responsible to manage the project, collect the data, aggregate the data and report the findings to the appropriate stakeholder(s).	
2009 - 2010		1.5	Create a data collection form.	
2009 - 2010		1.6	Communicate to the stakeholders involved in the data collection process what their responsibility is and where to get help if needed.	
2009 - 2010		1.7	Execute data inventory.	
2009 - 2010		1.8	Compile results in a logical and usable way to be shared with the stakeholder(s).	
2009 - 2010		1.9	Share results based on the project plan.	

Key Initiative #2

2. Create a Data Governance Board (DGB) to:

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		2.1	Create policy and procedures for communication.	
2009 - 2010		2.2	Review data elements from the inventory and identify challenge areas.	
2009 - 2010		2.3	Determine data elements to be standardized and reviewed for data quality improvements.	
2009 - 2010		2.4	Create a change control process.	
2009 - 2010		2.5	Create a monitoring system for overall data quality.	
2009 - 2010		2.6	Develop standard operating procedures (SOP) for new and existing data collection requirements. The SOP will include data format, ownership, and source.	
2009 - 2010		2.7	Develop a formal communication plan to cooperatively work with the Metrics Board.	

Key Initiative #3

3. Create a Metric Board to:

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		3.1	Create policy and procedures for communication and data delivery.	
2009 - 2010		3.2	Create standardized metrics.	
2009 - 2010		3.3	Create a formal process to receive and act on suggestions for the creation of reports.	
2009 - 2010		3.4	Create a change control process for changing & modifying reports.	
2009 - 2010		3.5	Develop a formal communication plan to cooperatively work with the Data Governance Board.	
2009 - 2010		3.6	Create a calendar of reporting requirements to ensure the data is entered and reported on time.	

Strategic Intent #15

By June 2014, at least 80% of our SCSD educational staff will have access to and an understanding of timely, relevant, accurate, user-friendly, data in context for planning purposes and supporting student achievement (Critical issues #2, 4, and 7).

Key Initiative #1

1. We will develop a process that will ensure the proper analysis and presentation of data by creating tools designed to clearly convey appropriate information to meet the needs of all stakeholders.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		1.1	Research different data analysis software packages and recommend a robust application as a standard for the district.	
2009 - 2010		1.2	Provide for comprehensive professional development in the software application, its implementation, statistics, and theories of proper use of data in educational settings to those assigned to perform the data analyses.	
2009 - 2010		1.3	Design standard reports and processes for presenting the findings of the data analyses of individual students, subgroups, content areas, grade levels, buildings, and the district.	
2009 - 2010		1.4	Provide professional development to those charged with presenting the results of the data analyses to appropriate members of the educational community in a way that will promote student achievement.	
2009 - 2010		1.5	Review state policy to ensure the district is in compliance with state privacy requirements.	

Key Initiative # 2

2. We will establish a Committee for Dissemination of Data (CDD), which will be charged with creating a system to efficiently and effectively disseminate data and/or information garnered from ongoing data analysis.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		2.1	Research and recommend a high quality and flexible interface that would make appropriate data immediately available to stakeholders without compromising the integrity of the original data.	
2009 - 2010		2.2	Create a standard process by which data and/or information can be requested from the district.	
2009 - 2010		2.3	Establish a system to track requests from the internal and external educational community.	
2009 - 2010		2.4	Devise a method to monitor data requests and the timeliness of the district's response to those requests.	
2009 - 2010		2.5	Inform all members of the educational community about the process for requesting information from the district.	

Key Initiative #3

3. We will create a process that will equip stakeholders to consistently utilize data to inform decision making in order to meet and maintain student excellence.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009 - 2010		3.1	Provide training to all stakeholders in the use of the interface and data analysis reports.	
2009 - 2010		3.2	Provide ongoing professional development to all stakeholders in effective ways to use data to positively impact instruction.	
2009 - 2010		3.3	Train two or more individuals in each building, including building principals and instructional coaches/literacy coaches, who will be responsible to provide continuing and prompt support in the interpretation and use of the data to others in their building, particularly as it applies to instruction.	
2009 - 2010		3.4	Develop a process by the district that will be responsive to additional requests for information and data analysis based on input from teachers, curriculum specialists, and administrators.	

Task Force Final Report: Section C Summary and Conclusions

Task Force:	Date:	Facilitator(s):
Data Analysis	May 6, 2009	Lori McKenna & Sal DeAngelo

The next several years will be challenging and demanding ones for all educators. No Child Left Behind and its accountability system bring constant challenges to all education agencies, and data is the key for determining if a school or district is meeting or exceeding NCLB standards and making informed decisions.

The task force began by reviewing the mission, vision, beliefs, and parameters for the district’s strategic planning initiative, as well as our charge. As a foundation for our work, the task force reviewed the *Forum Guide to Building a Culture of Quality Data: A School & District Resource National Forum on Education Statistics*. (2004). (NFES 2005–801). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

Based on the review, the members came to consensus that quality data

- ✓ is an integral part of teaching and learning;
- ✓ is something that everyone in a school/district is responsible for;
- ✓ helps us create orderly information from disorderly settings;
- ✓ is something that all staff must understand, including how it will be used and how it becomes information;
- ✓ can be achieved in a school/district through the collaborative efforts of all staff.

During the eight scheduled meetings, the members of the Data Analysis Task Force had the opportunity to review current and past data practices, from procedures, to training and professional development at the end-user’s level. From the review, strengths and challenges were identified from which findings, strategic intents, key initiatives, and action plans were developed. Three task force subgroups were formed based on the members’ expertise, and each was assigned a strategic intent to fully develop, along with resulting key initiatives and action plans.

As a result of hard work and dedication, the Data Analysis Task Force created three strategic intents and two to three key initiatives. These will provide the foundation for creating a culture where quality data can be collected, analyzed, and used to make informed data-driven decisions in order to increase academic excellence for all students in the district. The areas addressed in the plans include:

- ✓ policies and regulations
- ✓ standards and guidelines
- ✓ training and professional development
- ✓ data inventory
- ✓ timelines and calendars
- ✓ technology (hardware + software + network)
- ✓ data entry environment

The Data Analysis Task Force was cognizant of and sensitive to the difficult fiscal times the school district is facing and therefore, the plans presented have been carefully crafted to have little or no fiscal impact on the district's budget for the 2009-2010 school year.

Task Force Final Report: Section A

Task Force:	Date:	Facilitator(s):
#5 Learning Environments	May 6, 2009	Carmella Parente & Patty Paser

Members:	Suzanne Dewald, Neda Gadson, Joanne Ibrahim, Sarah Johnson, Sue Look, Mary Maitino, Ian McShane, Deb MacDerment, Val Palmieri, Comfort Sarfoh, Chris Simeone, Leslie Smith, Steve Strichman, Joanne Wolcott
Charge:	To investigate our teaching/learning environment and school culture to make recommendations in a way that maximizes effectiveness of instruction.

Internal Analysis (Strengths and Weaknesses)

Area: Physical Environment

Strength: Technology efforts, training and equipment, Smaller learning communities at the high school level with the houses, Individual investment of time and creativity (e.g. creating an appealing and organized space on a small budget), Energy conscientious district, Bookrooms are being created in all elementary buildings allowing all classrooms, special education and ELL teachers access to leveled resources.

Weakness: Lack of the amount of service needed for implementation of all technology, Lack of equality in resources between schools and houses (at the high school level), Lack of cleanliness in some buildings, Overall size of the district, Current registration location and subsequent process, Lack of aesthetically appropriate educational buildings and classrooms, Lack of long range planning for facilities based on needs assessment, Lack of lighting before and after school, Lack of communication and flexibility for changes in the physical environment (air, heat, lights), The learning spaces across the district vary greatly. Special area teachers in some schools do not have their own rooms with too much travel. Some classroom spaces are extremely tight, Physical spaces that are not maintained devalue staff and students.

Area: Culture

Strength: Smaller learning communities at the high school level with the houses, After school clubs and activities throughout the District, Opportunities of teachers to get to know students/parents, Individual investment of time and creativity (e.g. creating an appealing and organized space on a small budget), PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention Supports), Community partnerships, Support and encouraged risk of ability to investigate and implement newest educational techniques based on research, Mentoring of new teachers, Media, District has set a high level of expectations for all students to learn/achieve

Weakness: Lack of camaraderie (can be among teachers, schools, and the district), Lack of common time to plan both horizontally and vertically (at the high school and elementary levels), Lack of “customer service” (friendliness & helpfulness) training for all levels of staff, Weak transition of individual student needs between schools, Lack of targeted alternative environment, Lack of investigation, studying and collaboration on the educational plans that are made in the

entire system (district), Lack of cultural diversity training for all, Lack of communication and flexibility for changes in the physical environment (air, heat, lights), Parent partnerships, community partnerships, and university partnerships, Lack of support from home (for certain students), Lack of support by many for studying or collaborating/assisting with learning beyond school day, Media, Some lack of respect and understanding on the part of teachers/staff for students and parents, Some lack of respect for staff

Area: Student Engagement

Strength: Professional development (throughout the year and summer), Reduction of class size (for core instruction), Technology efforts, training and equipment, More of a focus of initiatives for district goals (literacy, differentiated instruction, mapping), Instructional coaches for the elementary program, Literacy coaches K-8, Curriculum mapping initiative, Teacher center grants Contract for Excellence money, federal and state funding (Title funding)

Weakness: Larger class sizes (in special area classes), Lack of the amount of service needed for implementation of all technology, Lack of equality in resources between schools and houses (at the high school level), When trying new strategies, implementation and evaluations do not consistently happen, Lack of investigation, studying and collaboration on the educational plans that are made in the entire system (district), Dependence on state funding (Contract For Excellence)

Strengths:

- Professional development (throughout the year and summer)
- Mentoring of new teachers
- Reduction of class size
- Technology efforts, training and equipment
- More of a focus of initiatives for district goals (literacy, differentiated instruction, mapping)
- Instructional coaches for the elementary program
- Literacy coaches K-8
- Curriculum mapping initiative
- Smaller learning communities at the high school level
- After school clubs and activities throughout the district
- Opportunities of teachers to get to know students/parents
- Individual investment of time and creativity (e.g. creating an appealing and organized space)
- PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention Supports)
- Support services
- SRO's (School Resource Officers)
- Community partnerships
- Energy conscientious district
- Bookrooms are being created in all elementary buildings allowing all classroom, special education and ELL teachers access to leveled resources.
- Support and encouraged risk of ability to investigate and implement newest educational techniques based on research
- Large efforts and commitment by pockets of dedicated paras, teachers, administrators to assist beyond what is required or expected (to help children, parents or other staff)

Weaknesses:

- Grant funded buildings have an abundance of resources that other schools are lacking.
- Larger class sizes (in special area classes, and remaining in some classes at all levels)
- Lack of the amount of service needed for implementation of all technology
- Lack of camaraderie (can be among teachers, schools, and the district)
- Lack of common time to plan both horizontally and vertically (at the high school and elementary levels)
- Lack of equality in resources between schools and houses (at the high school level)
- Lack of cleanliness in some buildings
- Some lack of respect and understanding from teachers/staff for students and parents
- Age of some of our facilities
- Overall size of the district
- Current registration location and subsequent process
- Lack of esthetically appropriate educational buildings
- Lack of long range planning for facilities based on needs assessment
- Lack of “customer service” training for all levels of staff
- Lack of lighting before and after school
- Constant interruptions on the PA at the high school after school
- Amount of time needed in order to change student placement when things are not working
- Weak transition of individual student needs between schools
- Lack of targeted alternative environment
- Inconsistent implementation and evaluations of new strategies
- Lack of investigation, studying and collaboration on the educational plans that are made in the entire system (district)
- Lack of cultural diversity training for all
- Lack of communication and flexibility for changes in the physical environment (air, heat, lights)
- Inconsistent quality of learning spaces across the district
- Physical spaces not maintained appropriately
- ELL and special education gaps: Looking at each child’s learning environments across the day as a whole program insuring that all students are getting coordinated instruction they deserve needs to be a priority.

External Analysis (Opportunities and Threats)

Opportunities:

- Teacher center grants
- Contract for Excellence money
- Federal and state funding (Title funding)
- Grants: 21st Century, mentoring
- Pockets of funding, for example, GE funding
- Parent partnerships
- Community partnerships
- University partnerships
- Media

Threats:

- The economy (the effect on increased taxes for building projects)
- Dependence on state funding (Contract For Excellence)
- Size and growth
- Abundance of research and development in education (yet no standard cure all)
- Lack of understanding of what teachers do
- Lack of support from home (for certain students)
- Lack of support by many for studying or collaborating/assisting with learning beyond school day
- Media
- State/federal monitoring tied to funding

Our Critical Issues: (Include all)

1. Do our staff and facilities create a safe and secure environment?
2. Do our staff and facilities create a welcoming environment?
3. Are professional and support staff (and facilities) able to meet the unique learning styles and needs of our students during instructional activities?
4. Are professional and support staff able to create a learning environment that promotes the learning of all students?
5. Do our physical facilities meet the needs of our students and staff now? Will they in the near future?
6. Are the technology needs of our students and staff being met with professional development and equipment that supports technology instruction?
7. Do all of our buildings, teachers and students have equal access to basic resources and spaces necessary for good learning and instruction?

Task Force Final Report: Section B Strategic Intents and Key Initiatives Summary

Strategic Intent #16

By June 2014, 90% of our community, professional staff, support staff, students and parents/families will indicate that they Agree/Strongly Agree our environment is conducive to learning and provides a positive, welcoming and open forum for communication.

Key Initiatives (# each)

1. We will create a welcoming environment for all visitors to our buildings.
2. We will create a professional development model for all Schenectady City School District staff to emphasize positive community relations.
3. We will emphasize to all staff and students the importance of presenting a positive, welcoming, and helpful environment while ensuring the safety of our schools.
4. We will establish a process to evaluate the effectiveness of our user-friendly, welcoming model.

Strategic Intent #17

By June 2014, 90% of our survey respondents will indicate that our schools support diversity, appreciate differences and similarities, and are willing to work collaboratively in a shared purpose.

Key Initiatives (# each)

1. We will continue to establish positive relationships with parents, students, community members or visitors to our school.
2. We will establish a minimum number of hours of effective culturally sensitive “customer service” responsiveness training for all staff.
3. We will evaluate our communication system and its use, with special attention to how we reach working families and non-English speakers.
4. We will use expert trainers to help us with “customer service.”
5. We will establish a procedure/program to recognize staff that consistently creates positive experiences for our children, visitors, parents and community members.

Strategic Intent #18

By June 2014, a 10-year Master Facility Improvement Plan with cycle maintenance program will be developed and implemented to ensure that all buildings are clean, maintained and appropriately equipped to reflect and support a positive learning environment for all students.

Key Initiatives (# each)

1. We will ensure that all facilities will meet the need for educating 21st century students.
2. We will emphasize high expectations of cleanliness and aesthetically inviting environments for all of our buildings.
3. We will work collaboratively to ensure all facilities are safe and well-maintained.

Strategic Intent #19

By June 2014, 90% of respondents will report feeling physically, emotionally and environmentally safe in their school building as measured by annual school climate surveys.

Key Initiatives (# each)

1. We will articulate, communicate and implement the state policies on “Intimidating, Harassing and Menacing Behavior.”
2. We will inform all members of the educational community of our strengths and weaknesses in school safety in and around our school buildings.
3. We will make recommendations based on survey results to improve the school environment.
4. We will review PBIS data and communicate results within schools, the community and the district.
5. We will establish comprehensive program options to assist regular education students who are having difficulties in their present settings.
6. We will establish comprehensive program options to assist students identified with special needs who are having difficulties in their present setting.

Strategic Intent #16

By June 2014, 90% of our community, professional staff, support staff, students and parents/families will indicate that they Agree/Strongly Agree our environment is conducive to learning and provides a positive, welcoming and open forum for communication.

Key Initiative #1

1. We will create a welcoming environment for all visitors to our buildings.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		1.1	Determine expectations of a welcoming environment for all our schools.	
2009-2010		1.2	Form a committee with a high representation of paraprofessionals, administrators, teachers, students, parents and community members to identify what a welcoming environment would look like, i.e. physical environment and expected staff interactions.	
2009-2010		1.3	Create materials to be distributed to visitors that will reinforce our positive atmosphere to include maps, contact information and the district calendar.	
2009-2010		1.4	Identify physical changes that need to be addressed in each building to match the expectations of the committee.	
2009-2010		1.5	Create a student ambassador program at each building.	

Key Initiative #2

2. We will create a professional development model for all Schenectady City School District staff to emphasize positive community relations.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		2.1	Survey paraprofessionals regarding what is needed to ensure positive daily interactions with anyone entering our buildings.	
2009-2010		2.2	Provide training including expectations of quality customer service.	

Key Initiative #3

3. We will emphasize to all staff and students the importance of presenting a positive, welcoming, and helpful environment while ensuring the safety of our schools.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		3.1	Each building level principal will coordinate with a staff member to ensure that the reasonable needs of visitors are met.	

Key Initiative #4

4. We will establish a process to evaluate the effectiveness of our user-friendly, welcoming model.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		4.1	Staff, board members and critical friends who regularly visit buildings will evaluate the effectiveness of our new user-friendly, welcoming model.	

Strategic Intent #17

By June 2014, 90% of our survey respondents will indicate that our schools support diversity, appreciate differences and similarities, and are willing to work collaboratively toward a shared purpose.

Key Initiative #1

1. We will continue to establish positive relationships with parents, students, community members or visitors to our school.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		1.1	Create community forums on different and pertinent topics at various locations throughout the district.	
2009-2010		1.2	Continue training on responsiveness training for teacher to student relationships or positive behaviour management techniques.	

Key Initiative #2

2. We will establish a minimum number of hours of effective culturally sensitive “customer service” responsiveness training for all staff.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		2.1	Train all staff in conflict resolution techniques. This should include staff to staff, staff to student, and student to staff problem solving.	
2009-2010		2.2	Offer professional development on stress management.	
2009-2010		2.3	Offer professional development that focuses on cultural differences in our community.	

Key Initiative #3

3. We will evaluate our communication system and its use, with special attention to how we reach working families and non-English speakers.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		3.1	Design web and print communication to help non-English speakers.	
2009-2010		3.2	Continue to investigate our Pentamation Home Access features.	
2009-2010		3.3	Identify and replicate best practices of effective parent/teacher communication.	
2009-2010		3.4	Explore the timeliness of translating home/school communications including monthly newsletters.	

Key Initiative #4

4. We will use expert trainers to help us with “customer service.”

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		4.1	Explore other public Schenectady institutions, training models and programs that embody welcoming and positive customer service.	

Key Initiative #5

5. We will establish a procedure/program to recognize staff that consistently creates positive experiences for our children, visitors, parents and community members.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		5.1	Form a committee that regularly recognizes staff contributing to positive experiences for students, parents and visitors (and create a funding plan).	

Strategic Intent #18

By June 2014 the District will establish comprehensive facilities standards to ensure all educational goals can be met. These standards will ensure that all buildings are clean, maintained and appropriately equipped to reflect and support a positive learning environment for all students.

Key Initiative #1

1. We will ensure that all facilities will meet the need for educating 21st century students.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		1.1	Develop the standard of what is essential to classroom teachers for effective teaching and learning.	
2009-2010		1.2	Create a survey that will outline the strengths, weaknesses, and needs of all facilities.	
2009-2010		1.3	Continue our commitment to lower class size equitably in all levels of instruction.	
2009-2010		1.4	Establish a long range facilities building plan, based on the survey of facilities and factoring in the input of city planners.	
2009-2010		1.5	Work in conjunction with the City of Schenectady and other agencies to ensure that we are preparing our facilities to meet the needs of the anticipated population growth.	
2009-2010		1.6	Consistently hire and review hiring needs of the facilities, maintenance and cleaning personnel.	

Key Initiative #2

2. We will emphasize high expectations of cleanliness and aesthetically inviting environments for all of our buildings.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		2.1	Establish a standard of cleanliness that all buildings will be expected to meet.	
2009-2010		2.2	Establish a cycle of inspections to ensure cleanliness in our schools.	

Key Initiative #3

3. We will work collaboratively to ensure all facilities are safe and well-maintained.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		3.1	Create a steering committee whose charge is to evaluate long term effects of safety and security initiatives.	
2009-2010		3.2	Continue to evaluate building safety plans.	

Strategic Intent #19

By June 2014, school staff, students, parents and community constituents will report feeling physically, emotionally and environmentally safe in their school building as measured by school climate surveys, community forums, meetings, etc.

Key Initiative #1

1. We will articulate, communicate and implement the state policies on “Intimidating, Harassing and Menacing Behavior.”

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		1.1	Train all staff in teaching approaches for positive student interactions and how to effectively teach the negative implications that result from intimidating, harassing and menacing behaviors.	
2009-2010		1.2	Continue to work with the community and city officials on gang intervention.	

Key Initiative #2

2. We will inform all members of the educational community of our strengths and weaknesses in school safety in and around our school buildings.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		2.1	Create community forums involving the public, e.g. neighborhood watch groups, law enforcement and probation.	
2009-2010		2.2	Address issues related to neighbourhood concerns and gang related issues that occur in and out of school.	

Key Initiative #3

3. We will make recommendations based on survey results to improve the school environment.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		3.1	Design an effective survey that will give information on affected areas including but not limited to entrances and playgrounds, and evaluate daily traffic patterns for effectiveness and consistency from a safety standpoint.	

Key Initiative #4

4. We will review PBIS data and communicate results within schools, the community and the district.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		4.1	Continue to maintain and utilize PBIS models at all grade levels to help support the philosophy of a positive and safe environment.	

Key Initiative #5

5. We will establish comprehensive program options to assist regular education students who are having difficulties in their present settings.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		5.1	Continue to develop and implement the RTI (Response to Intervention) approach for regular education students to ensure that alternative educational environments or programs are being used for those students who are struggling academically and emotionally. Use a steering committee of those at all levels to help solicit best practices and ideas.	
2009 - 2010		5.2	Establish a steering committee that will specifically look at students who are struggling emotionally. This action plan would also deal with Key Initiative 6 (that follows).	

Key Initiative #6

6. We will establish comprehensive program options to assist students identified with special needs who are having difficulties in their present setting.

Year	Cost	#	Action Plan	Who
2009-2010		6.1	To establish a steering committee to look at best practices for alternative educational environments or programs for those students who are struggling to achieve academically and emotionally. This committee would address an earlier and timely approach (preferably as early as a first grade reporting) for students who are not succeeding.	

Task Force Final Report: Section C Summary and Conclusions

Task Force:	Date:	Facilitator(s):
Learning Environments	May 6, 2009	Carmella Parente & Patty Paser

The Learning Environments Committee was composed of teachers from all levels, administrators and several community members. Though some members of the committee were in attendance at a minimal number of meetings, they were able to communicate both positive and negative experiences in our district along with suggestions for improvement through email and discussions with other members of the committee.

The task force examined several sources of data, and also randomly interviewed visitors to the various schools in the district. The charge that was presented to the committee was to examine strengths and weaknesses in the area of learning environment with an eye toward recommending improvements for the future. By charting the strengths and weaknesses reported by members of the committee, a baseline was created acknowledging the work the District has accomplished and the work that lies ahead. Based on the analysis of this data, four Strategic Intents were developed with the assistance of the Core Group and the Task Force. The Strategic Intents and subsequent key initiatives center on an atmosphere that promotes positive communication and a cooperative spirit within the school community – students, parents, and staff. The Learning Environment Committee recognized that the physical surroundings are directly linked to the development and support of a long range facilities plan that addresses the needs of a 21st century classroom and school building.

Once the Key Initiatives were developed and refined, action plans were brainstormed and created for each initiative. Most of the action plans do not require financial support, and some represent a continuation of actions that the District has already taken which have resulted in significant progress. Some of the action plans call for soliciting additional input and expanding committee membership to ensure representation of all stakeholders. Other committees would require the input of building level staff including the principal, paraprofessionals and teachers.

Ultimately, the committee believes the proposals made are realistic and will result in a more productive school environment. The recommendations reflect a district that values open communication, diversity and a common goal of creating a culture that reflects cooperative and positive efforts that support student learning.