

## **District Improvement**

During the 2013-14 school year, Toppenish School District became a member of the Washington State Leadership Academy. The Academy's mission is to develop and support school leaders to create educational systems where powerful instruction helps students succeed. With the Academy's help, Toppenish School District is building a district wide plan of improvement which will provide clear expectations and goals for increasing student learning.

The Washington State Leadership Academy (WSLA) complements our District's mission of "We do what is best for kids", by emphasizing the importance of focusing on issues of improving learning for students and teachers. Our work with WSLA has also focused on taking actions that directly improve the quality of instruction in classrooms every day for every student. Our District Improvement Plan is a reflection of this work and commitment to all students of the Toppenish School District. Our District Improvement Plan was built by a team of teachers and administrators spanning preschool through high school. It is designed so that it will be living document that can be referred to daily rather than be put on a shelf and forgotten. It not only meets the needs of our students and teachers today, but is designed to be modified to meet the needs of the future.

The plan not only includes our mission "We do what is best for kids", but also our vision, "We will produce superior graduates who are college and career ready, prepared to excel at the college level, who make wise choices, think critically, communicate effectively, and solve problems. We do this by creating safe, innovative and stimulating learning environments and by developing interactive partnerships among parents, students, colleagues and the community".

The plan is modeled on the Danielson Instructional Framework. This Framework was adopted by the district to guide the work and outcomes of the newly required Washington State teacher and principal evaluation system. Each school district in the state was required to adopt one of the three eligible frameworks presented. Toppenish administrators and teachers worked together to select the Danielson Instructional Framework as the district model for teaching. All teachers in the district have been evaluated using this guide. Since the domains and components of the Framework were so familiar to teachers and administrators, the next logical step was to build our plan for increasing student learning around this model.

Our plan is divided in to four domains that reflect the Danielson Instructional Framework. They are: Planning/Curriculum/Assessment, District/School/Classroom Environment, Professional Practices, and Instruction. Under each of these domains, we have identified critical components that span our Pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade system. Under the Planning/Curriculum/Assessment domain, we are working to ensure that every student has a guaranteed and viable curriculum, or, that each student is learning the same rigorous material and concepts based on the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards. We are also integrating 21<sup>st</sup> century technology skills into our educational programs and use student data to inform and drive our classroom instruction. Under the domain of District/School/Classroom Environment, we are focusing on safe and secure learning environments and developing positive relationships with all district stakeholders. We will continue and

work to expand our Renaissance program to provide recognition to students who excel or improve in a variety of areas as well as recognizing our teachers and staff for going above and beyond. Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS) will continue to be a major focus at our elementary schools. The PBIS program teaches and reinforces positive behaviors and school rules and rewards students for meeting expectations. In the Professional Practices domain, Toppenish School District is committed to providing a welcoming and family friendly environment for our students, families, and community. We are also focused on providing our staff with professional development opportunities that allow them to increase their skills and delivery of instruction to our students. We also provide a new teacher mentoring program to help and support staff that are new to the profession. These efforts are intended to promote successful classrooms and to encourage new staff to stay in the teaching profession. Toppenish School District is also continuing to provide training and support for the new teacher and principal evaluation system. This system is making our teachers and principals better at their craft and increasing student achievement. The final domain, Instruction, is very important. We are constantly reviewing the latest research and seeking out new methods, as well as the tried and true, to integrate into our classroom practice. Part of this is our Response to Intervention component. By frequently reviewing student data, we can provide timely remediation or extensions to meet the unique learning needs of our students. The Response to Intervention also complements our focus on providing our special needs students the least restrictive educational environment that provides them the maximum opportunities to be regular classrooms and still meet their need for specially designed instruction. Our standards based grading component is also a reflection of using student data to pinpoint current levels of student academic performance and chart a course toward mastery of grade level skills. Our last component is our Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) focus. During the 2014-15 school year, Toppenish School District will have a comprehensive Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade STEM program that provides all students with an opportunity to be involved in challenging, project based activities. Our STEM program has been recognized across the state and the nation for promoting higher order thinking and motivating students to stay in school and graduate! As reported in the Seattle Times, Toppenish High School's 94% graduation rate is something to be envied by schools across the state.

Not only have our rigorous and engaging programs kept students in school, so have our K-12 graduation specialists. Both Toppenish High School and Eagle High School have full time graduation specialists on their campuses. The graduation specialists work with students to make sure they are on target to graduate, have met, or have a plan to meet, all state testing requirements, and are overcoming obstacles to regular school attendance. Toppenish Middle School, Toppenish Preschool, and our four elementary schools share a graduation specialist. Our preschool through grade 8 graduation specialist provides early intervention to help students and families to overcome risk factors that predict school failure. These include poor attendance, chronic tardiness, and behavior problems.

Through our comprehensive District Improvement Plan and our graduation specialist supports, we are helping more students to become career and college ready when they leave high school. We invite you to visit our schools and join in our many celebrations of success.