



School Quality Review Report

Cannelton Elementary and High School

Cannelton City Schools

October 22-23, 2018

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I. Background on the School Quality Review

Public Law 221 (PL 221-99) serves as the state’s accountability framework. Among other sanctions, the law authorizes the Indiana State Board of Education (SBOE) to assign an expert team to conduct a School Quality Review for schools placed in the lowest category or designation of school performance for two consecutive years.

(a) The board shall direct that the department conduct a quality review of a school that is subject to IC 20-31-9-3. (b) The board shall determine the scope of the review and appoint an expert team under IC 20-31-9-3. (Indiana State Board of Education; 511 IAC 6.2-8-2; filed Jan 28, 2011, 3:08 p.m.: 20110223-IR-511100502FRA)

The school quality review (SQR) is a needs assessment meant to evaluate the academic program and operational conditions within an eligible school. The SQR will result in actionable feedback that will promote improvement, including the reallocation of resources or requests for technical assistance. The process is guided by a rubric aligned to [“5Essentials Framework for School Improvement” developed by the Consortium on School Research at the University of Chicago](#) (Appendix B). The school quality review includes a pre-visit analysis and planning meeting, two-day, on-site comprehensive review, and may include targeted follow-up visits.

State law authorizes the SBOE to establish an expert team to conduct the School Quality Review known as the Technical Assistance Team (TAT). Membership must include representatives from the community or region the school serves; and, may consist of school superintendents, members of governing bodies, teachers from high performing school corporations, and special consultants or advisers.

II. Overview of the School Quality Review Process

The School Quality Review process is designed to identify Cannelton Elementary and High Schools’ strengths and areas for improvement aligned to the [“5Essentials for School Improvement” framework developed by the Consortium on School Research at the University of Chicago](#). The School Quality Review process focused on the “Effective Leaders” domain of this framework as well as two other domains from the framework that were selected as priorities by the school and its district.

The on-site review consisted of the Technical Assistance Team (TAT) visiting the school for two days. During the two days, the TAT (1) conducted separate focus groups with students, teachers, and parents, (2) observed instruction in 29 classrooms, and (3) interviewed school and district leaders.

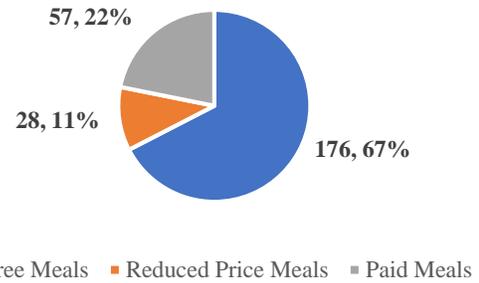
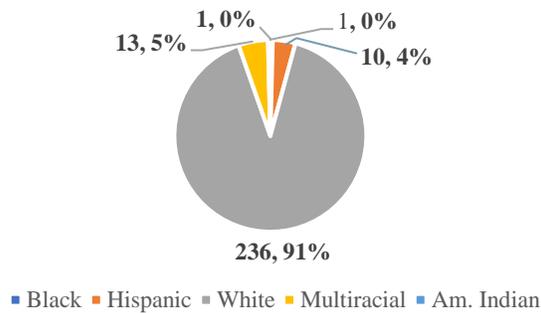
Prior to the visit, teachers completed an online survey, with 7 of 20 teachers participating. Parents and family members were also invited to complete a survey; 14 completed this survey. Finally, the school leadership team completed a self-evaluation. Both surveys and the self-evaluation are made up of questions that align to [“5Essentials for School Improvement” framework developed by the Consortium on School Research at the University of Chicago](#).

III. Data Snapshot for Cannelton Elementary and High School

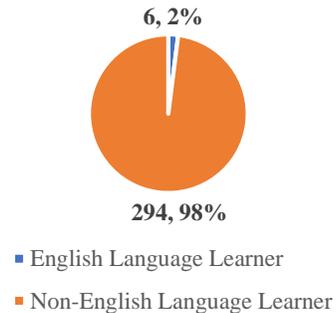
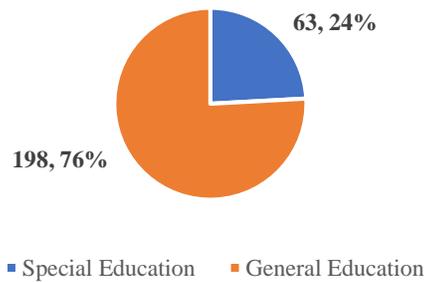
School Report Card							
2016-2017 Report Card	Points	Weight	Weighted Points	2017-2018 Report Card	Points	Weight	Weighted Points
Performance Domain Grades 3-8	50.30	0.289	14.54	Performance Domain Grades 3-8	50.60	0.272	13.76
Performance Domain Grade 10	19.30	0.169	3.26	Performance Domain Grade 10	23.10	0.183	4.23
Growth Domain Grades 4-8	72.80	0.289	21.04	Growth Domain Grades 4-8	86.50	0.272	23.53
Growth Domain Grades 10-12	0.0	0.00	0.00	Growth Domain Grade 10-12	0.00	0.00	0.00
Multiple Measures Grade 12	83.40	0.253	21.10	Multiple Measures Grade 12	73.80	0.274	20.22
Overall Points			59.9	Overall Points			61.7
Overall Grade			F	Overall Grade			D

Enrollment 2017-2018: 261 students

Enrollment 2017-2018 by Ethnicity	Enrollment 2017-2018 by Free/Reduced Price Meals
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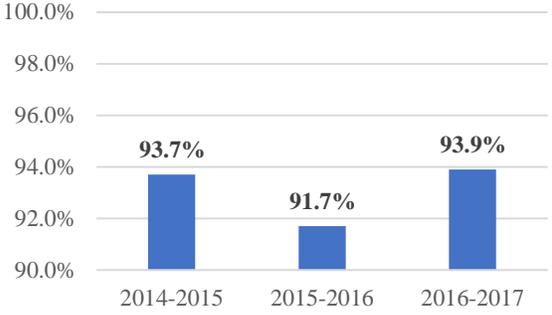


Enrollment 2017-2018 by Special Education	Enrollment 2017-2018 by English Language Learners
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Attendance

Attendance by Grade				Attendance Rate Trend	
Grade	'14-'15	'15-'16	'16-'17		
K	92.4%		91.2%		
1	96.6%		93.6%		
2	94.1%		94.7%		
3	94.8%		97.6%		
4	94.3%		95.3%		
5	96.1%		94.5%		
6	97.3%	94.8%	94.1%		
7	96.7%	95.1%	95.8%		
8	92.9%	95.8%	95.3%		
9	90.4%	87.6%	94.5%		
10	92.6%		94.0%		
11	90.5%	87.0%	91.6%		
12	87.9%	91.4%	88.2%		



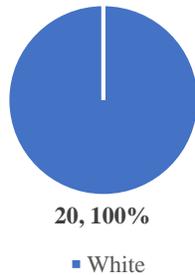
Attendance Rate Trend

Year	Attendance Rate
2014-2015	93.7%
2015-2016	91.7%
2016-2017	93.9%

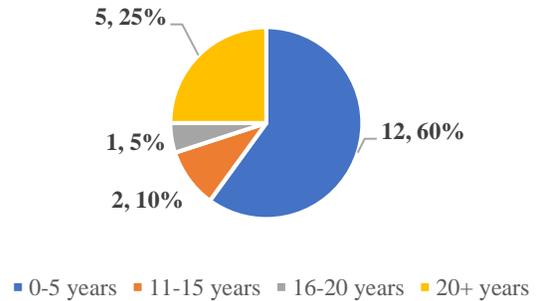
School Personnel

Teacher Count 2016-2017: 20

Teacher Count 2016-2017 by Ethnicity

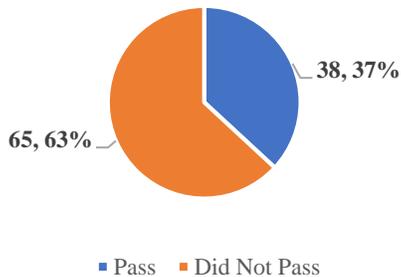


Teacher Count 2016-2017 by Years of Experience

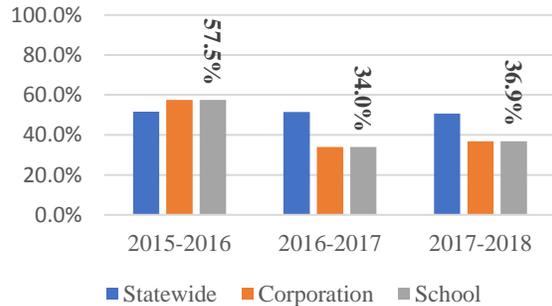


Student Academic Performance

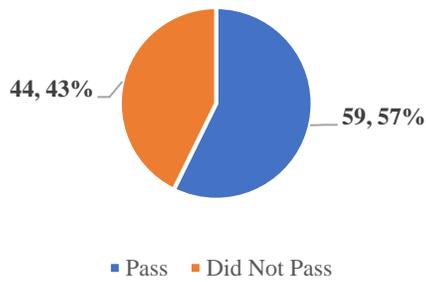
ISTEP+ 2017-2018 Percent Passing Both English/Language Arts and Math



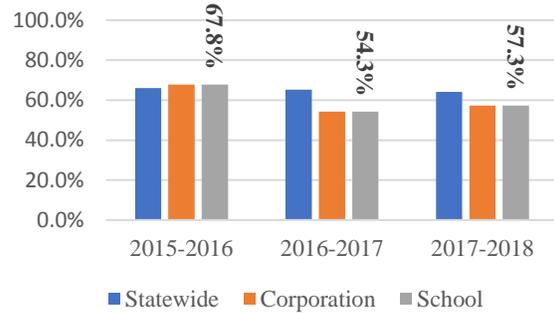
ISTEP+ Percent Passing Trend Both English/Language Arts and Math



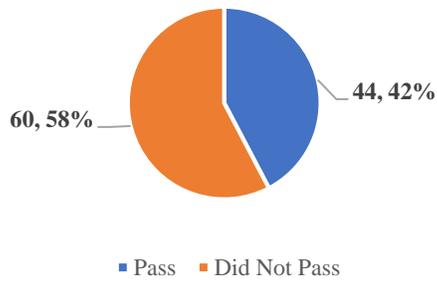
ISTEP+ 2017-2018 Percent Passing English/Language Arts



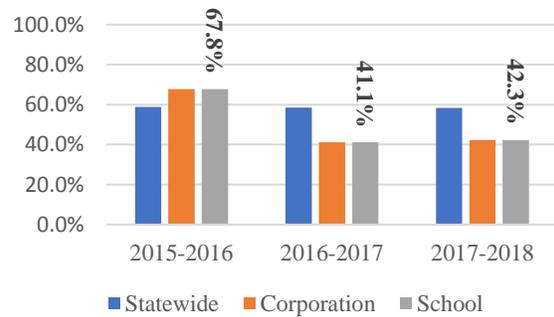
ISTEP+ Percent Passing Trend English/Language Arts



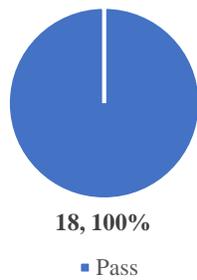
ISTEP+ 2017-2018 Percent Passing Math



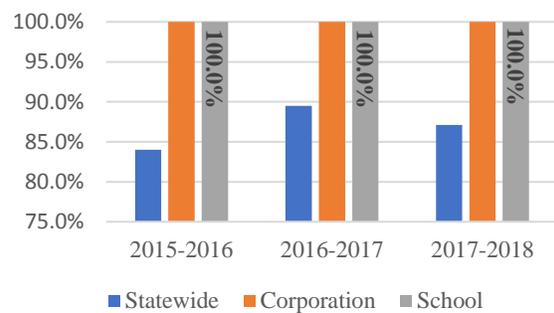
ISTEP+ Percent Passing Trend Math



IREAD-3 2017-2018 Percent Passing



IREAD-3 Percent Passing Trend



IV. Evidence and Rating for the Effective Leaders Domain

Background

The next three sections of the report illustrate the Technical Assistance Team’s key findings, supporting evidence, and overall rating for the Effective Leaders domain and two other domains from the “5Essentials for School Improvement” framework that were selected as priorities by the school and its district.

To thoughtfully identify the two additional prioritized domains from the “5Essentials for School Improvement” framework, school and district leaders used a “School Improvement Essentials Alignment Tool” provided by the Indiana State Board of Education to determine the two other domains from the “5Essentials for School Improvement” framework that most closely align with the goals and strategies outlined in the school’s improvement plan.

This report focuses on these three prioritized domains from the “5Essentials for School Improvement” framework to provide a strategically targeted set of findings and recommendations. Additional evidence on the other two domains from the “5Essentials for School Improvement” framework can be found in Appendix A of this report.

Domain from the “5 Essentials for School Improvement” Framework: Effective Leaders			
Evidence Sources			
School leader self-evaluation; and school improvement plan. Documents provided by the school, student focus group, teacher focus group, caregiver focus group, community focus group, meeting with district leadership, meeting with instructional leadership, meetings with principal, caregiver survey, and staff survey			
Rating			
1 <u>Ineffective</u>	2 <u>Improvement Necessary</u>	3 <u>Effective</u>	4 <u>Highly Effective</u>
<i>Insufficient evidence of this happening in the school</i>	<i>Limited evidence of this happening in the school</i>	<i>Routine and consistent</i>	<i>Exceeds standard and drives student achievement</i>
Evidence			Aligned “5Essentials” Framework Indicator(s)
Strengths			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Processes for school improvement, including implementation of a district coach to support instruction and implementation of data-informed decision making, are being developed. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.3, 2.3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As determined through stakeholder surveys and focus group discussions, the school leader models fair and equitable behavior and fosters trusting relationships across the school community. 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.5, 3.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on discussions during the Teacher Focus Groups and meetings with the principal, some elementary staff share 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.2

leadership responsibilities in roles of discipline, technology integration, and data management.	
Areas for Improvement	Aligned “5Essentials” Framework Indicator(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As determined by discussions with focus groups and individuals during the visit, a clearly defined vision of high levels of learning for all students and a coherent mission that defines how the school will realize this vision have not been established. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1, 1.3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on evidence gathered during focus group discussions and review of provided materials, there is little to no documentation on teacher performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From discussions during focus groups and review of provided materials, there is little to no evidence of action planning based on the data at various points in the year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.3, 2.3

V. Evidence and Rating for the Ambitious Instruction Domain

Domain from the “5 Essentials for School Improvement” Framework: Ambitious Instruction			
Evidence Sources			
School leader self-evaluation; school improvement plan, documents provided by the school, student focus group, teacher focus group, caregiver focus group, community focus group, meeting with district leadership, meeting with instructional leadership, and meeting with principal.			
Rating			
<p style="text-align: center;">1 <u>Ineffective</u></p> <p><i>Insufficient evidence of this happening in the school</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2 <u>Improvement Necessary</u></p> <p><i>Limited evidence of this happening in the school</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">3 <u>Effective</u></p> <p><i>Routine and consistent</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">4 <u>Highly Effective</u></p> <p><i>Exceeds standard and drives student achievement</i></p>
Evidence			
Strengths		Aligned “5Essentials” Framework Indicator(s)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some teachers utilize remediation labs, data, and allotted times in the master schedule to provide additional supports to students who require supplemental instruction. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.3 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on observations by the Technical Assistance Team, at some grade levels and in some subjects, research-based core and supplemental curriculum resources have been acquired by the school. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 	
Areas for Improvement		Aligned “5Essentials” Framework Indicator(s)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As determined through discussions with school leadership, review of the School Leader Self-Evaluation, and direct 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2.2 	

observation of instruction, no evidence exists of clear expectations for teachers to implement the existing curriculum with fidelity, representing a lack of urgency to ensure Indiana Academic Standards are taught to, and mastered by all students.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As observed during classroom visits by the Technical Assistance Team, learning objectives aligned to the academic standards were evident in only 57% of classrooms. 	• 2.2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Based on direct observations, a review of provided data, and discussions during focus groups, there is little evidence that teachers are implementing high-leverage instructional strategies to meet the needs of students. 	• 2.3, 2.4, 2.5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence exists that student learning is not a priority in some classes. During several observations, students were engaged in non-academic activities on cell phones and online (e.g. playing video games). 	• 2.4, 2.5, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1

VI. Evidence and Rating for the Collaborative Teachers Domain

Domain from the “5 Essentials for School Improvement” Framework: Collaborative Teachers			
Evidence Sources			
School leader self-evaluation; school improvement plan, documents provided by the school, student focus group, teacher focus group, caregiver focus group, community focus group, meeting with district leadership, meeting with instructional leadership, and meeting with principal.			
Rating			
1 <u>Ineffective</u>	2 <u>Improvement Necessary</u>	3 <u>Effective</u>	4 <u>Highly Effective</u>
<i>Insufficient evidence of this happening in the school</i>	<i>Limited evidence of this happening in the school</i>	<i>Routine and consistent</i>	<i>Exceeds standard and drives student achievement</i>
Evidence			
Strengths			Aligned “5Essentials” Framework Indicator(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers express the desire to develop their capacity in high-leverage instructional strategies and methods, as determined through discussions during the Teacher Focus Groups and individual teachers. 			• 4.2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While not presently in place, there is recognition by school leaders for the need for a coherent system of supports for new teachers. 			• 4.4
Areas for Improvement			Aligned “5Essentials” Framework Indicator(s)

• A culture that embraces and models a growth-mindset and belief that all students will learn is not present among faculty and staff.	• 4.1, 3.2
• There is little to no evidence of a well-functioning system for supporting new teachers.	• 4.4
• Coaching cycles, based on observations and data analysis to develop educator capacity to meet the needs of all students, do not exist.	• 4.3
• A comprehensive plan for identifying professional development priorities and implementing an outcomes-based plan for building teachers' capacity has not been constituted as indicated through discussions with focus group participants and study of materials supplied by the school.	• 4.2

VII. Recommendations

Background

This section outlines an intentionally targeted set of recommendations that align to one or more of the prioritized domains. Anchored in the [“5Essentials for School Improvement” framework developed by the Consortium on School Research at the University of Chicago](#), these recommendations are representative of what the Technical Assistance Team believes to be the most immediate changes needed to accelerate growth in academic and non-academic student outcomes at Cannelton Elementary and High School.

These recommendations should not be thought of as an exhaustive set of school improvement strategies, but rather as a part of the ongoing and continuous school improvement process.

Recommendation 1
Develop a comprehensive and sustainable framework for school improvement by: 1) establishing a common set of core values that represent stakeholders across the school community; 2) developing a focused vision for high levels of learning for all students; and 3) developing a corresponding mission that articulates how the school will realize this vision. Assume responsibility for, and commit to assuring student learning despite issues such as poverty and drug abuse, which are outside of the school’s direct locus of control. In operationalizing the mission, commit to recognizing students’ talents, building self-efficacy, and maintaining high expectations with commensurate high levels of support. The culmination of the above should engender a positive culture where student success and a system of mutual support is pervasive and effectuates continuous improvement.
Aligned Domain(s) from the “5 Essentials for School Improvement” Framework
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effective Leaders• Ambitious Instruction• Supportive Environment• Collaborative Teachers• Family Involvement
Rationale
<p>An essential responsibility for school leaders is to develop and deliver a compelling picture of the school’s future. A vision articulates what a school will become and is the most potent leadership tool for a principal who is committed to developing a coherent and sustainable framework for continuous improvement.¹ Arguably, to say that a school <i>can</i> reach its vision is not enough. A school community must assert that it <i>will</i> realize its vision and commit any and all resources to doing so.</p> <p>Ultimately, a school’s espoused vision and mission become the inherent fabric of the school’s culture. That is, a school’s vision, unstated, is discernable by the culture that exists. The mission, unstated, is manifest by the ever-present actions of school personnel, students, and parents. Combined with a continuous analysis of achievement and other performance data, these become the focus, filter, and engine that drive every decision. A vision devoted to high levels of learning for all students is the epitome of a school fully devoted to the success of each and every child.</p>

¹ Kanold, T.D. (2011). *The five disciplines of PLC leaders*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.

Through discussions with students, staff, and other stakeholders at Cannelton Elementary and High School, no clear vision for students' academic success could be articulated. Moreover, the urgency for such success is in question given that the most current school improvement plan, for the 2016-2017 school year, was incomplete. That said, recently revised elementary and secondary handbooks contain written vision or mission statements (neither included both). The extent to which the school community was involved in the handbooks' developments was unknown to those interviewed by the visiting team.

The vision statement, found in the *Cannelton Middle/High School Handbook*, states the school "provides a secure and respectful community setting where everyone is instilled with a passion for personal and global excellence." Such setting and passion are noble and necessary for student success. The visiting found a relatively secure and very respectful community setting at Cannelton Elementary and High School however did not detect a passion for personal and global excellence.

During the school quality review, the visiting team found a pervasive belief that many Cannelton students, by virtue of their impoverished conditions, are less likely attain high levels of academic success. This belief was implicit in the quality of instruction and explicit during conversations in focus groups and with staff, parents, and community members. The school's drop-out rate (approximately 7.2% in 2017-2018), low graduation rate (47.6% in 2017-2018), and low 2017-2018 attendance rate (88.2% in grade 12 and 93.9% overall) were attributed, in large part, to students' attitudes towards school and attitudes toward themselves. Additionally, societal factors such as drug abuse and familial conditions were considered attributions.

To be sure, ample research substantiates a connection between poverty and academic performance. For example, strong evidence exists that poverty can have adverse effects on cerebral lobes related to language (temporal lobe) and executive functioning (frontal lobe).² Other researchers found correlations between poverty, reading, and verbal abilities. This reinforces that language is one of the cognitive domains most affected by poverty. Interestingly, correlations with other cognitive skills were not significant.³

Despite these factors, researchers posit that when working with a population of students in poverty, "good schools can make a difference by directing resources toward enhancing the school organization, resources, and teachers' abilities and attitudes."⁴ That is, schools committed to a vision that all students will learn at high levels, can and should understand the mitigating factors that poverty asserts, yet not view students from the standpoint of where they are but what they can become. Given that high expectations for academics were found in just over 29% of the observed classrooms and that rigorous instruction using, higher levels of depth of knowledge and questioning were found in only 10% of observed classrooms, the

² Hair, N. L., Hanson, J. L., Wolfe, B. L., & Pollak, S. D. (2015). Association of Child Poverty, Brain Development, and Academic Achievement. *JAMA Pediatrics*, 169(9), 822. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2015.1475

³ Jednoro'g K, Altarelli I, Monzalvo K, Fluss J, Dubois J, et al. (2012) The Influence of Socioeconomic Status on Children's Brain Structure. *PLoS ONE* 7(8): e42486. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0042486

⁴ *The Impact of Poverty on a Child's Academic Performance*(Rep.). (n.d.). Retrieved November 1, 2018, from Education & Workforce Development Task Force/The Institute for Public Policy and Economic Development at Wilkes University website: <http://www.institutepa.org/pdf/indicators/2016/povertyandacademicperformce.pdf>

espoused vision for a “passion for personal and global excellence” was not substantiated. Moreover, the attribution of students’ lack of success to the societal factors and students’ themselves while minimizing the effect of the school is inconsistent with research and indicative of lack of a growth mindset.

Next to safety, educating each student is the primary responsibility of every school. It is incumbent on schools and the personnel with whom caregivers entrust their children, to recognize that every child possesses inherent talents and skills. Schools committed to such belief recognize their responsibility to provide the highest caliber instruction and cultivate students’ talents by building self-efficacy - the belief in one’s own capabilities to perform at desired levels and manage events and situations that affect his or her life. In schools this pertains specifically to academic self-efficacy - a student’s perception of his or her competence to do classwork, which correlates with academic achievement.⁵

There is optimism that school leadership at Cannelton Elementary and High School will take the necessary steps to improve the success of all students, given their fervent desire and positive attitude displayed by the school principal during the visit. The above recommendation is intended to aid in taking that first step.

In summary, commit to building and sustaining a culture where all students will learn and be supported in doing so by:

- Defining collective values and building upon those to develop a vision of success for all students and a mission that ensures the vision becomes reality.
- Maintaining high expectations for, and a collective commitment to success by all staff, students, parents, and community stakeholders.
- Intentionally recognizing students’ innate talents and abilities, and developing their self-efficacy. With proper school and community support, this should fortify students’ self-worth, propel them to follow their college/career aspirations, and provide a solid learning foundation upon which they may build their lives.

⁵ Kolo, A. G., Jaafar, W., & Ahmad, N. (2017). Relationship between Academic Self-efficacy Believed of ... Retrieved November 1, 2018, from <http://www.iosrjournals.org/iosr-jhss/papers/Vol. 22 Issue1/Version-6/M2201067580.pdf> DOI: 10.9790/0837-2201067580

Recommendation 2
<p>Conduct a comprehensive assessment of current instructional practices and develop a coherent plan of action to systematically increase the instructional capacity of all teachers to a level where consistent, high quality instruction is continuously present throughout the schools. Support teachers’ professional growth through personalized, on-going, job-embedded coaching. Consistently monitor expected instructional practices and provide specific, timely feedback to support and produce elemental improvements.</p>
Aligned Domain(s) from the “5 Essentials for School Improvement” Framework
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective Leaders • Ambitious Instruction • Supportive Environment
Rationale
<p>Reflecting on the first recommendation, Cannelton Elementary and High School must agree on what they believe (values), where they are going (vision), and how they will get there (mission). Since a school’s primary responsibility (in addition to providing a safe and secure learning environment) is to ensure that all students learn at high levels, it follows that the vision and mission rely significantly on high quality instruction. Absent high quality instruction, learning is left to chance.</p> <p>Cannelton Elementary and High School are unique in their size and structure, presenting challenges and opportunities for ensuring all students learn at high levels. The visiting team found staff and students to be respectful and desirous of ideas for improvement. Through focus group interviews and conversations with individuals, the visiting team made a number of positive general observations about the school and community. Despite these, there exists a low attendance rate; diminished achievement scores as students move through grade levels; a graduation rate no higher than 66.7% since 2014; the idea among some teachers that students who may not attend college do not need rigorous instruction; and, students given the choice to “opt out” of class work.</p> <p>All or some of the above issues may be rooted in that which the team found during its observation of classroom instruction. Admittedly, the 29 classroom observations conducted over two days provided a “snapshot” of instruction throughout the year. Nevertheless, quantitative and qualitative evidence revealed a serious insufficiency of effective instruction, particularly at the secondary level. For example, observations of instruction where conclusions could be made, found high academic expectations present 29.6% of the time; lesson correlation to academic standards discernable 57% of the time; students meaningfully engaged in productive learning tasks 45% of the time; students able to articulate real-world connections for lessons 15.4% of the time; and, teachers accurately checking students’ understanding of key content at key moments 33.3% of the time.</p> <p>Some staff recognize the presence of these deficits. This was found in submitted surveys and during focus group discussions with the principal, school leadership, teachers, and district personnel. For example, school leadership noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff too easily allows students to opt out of daily classroom activities and that some instructional practices leave student bored from lack of activity. • Classroom instruction is too teacher-centered rather than of student-centered.”

Teachers communicated:

- No professional development has been provided for some time (one person indicated 6 years)
- There has been a lack of administrative feedback on what is observed in the classroom.
- Approximately 83 percent of those surveyed somewhat to strongly disagreed that teachers are provided with varied opportunities to engage in meaningful, data-driven coaching cycles to improve their instructional practices.

Studies have documented the differential effect of teachers on student achievement gains. Such positive differences were reported to be over one third standard deviation in reading and nearly a half standard deviation in math.⁶ The purpose of this recommendation is to aid Cannelton Elementary and High School in ensuring teachers possess the necessary knowledge and skills to engender such student achievement.

School leadership may consider dividing a plan of action into short-term and long-range components. That is, urgency requires incremental changes be commenced sooner rather than later. In assessing teachers' existing capacities and readiness, it is most likely that staff are at different stages of effectiveness. For example, during the visit some staff were cognizant of the concepts of differentiation, engagement, and use of data to inform subsequent instruction. In this regard, school leadership might embark on a continuous improvement process⁷ using the following ideas: 1) Identify a limited number of high-yield instructional strategies that are pervasively deficient, yet somewhat familiar to staff; 2) provide intensive professional growth sessions (on only one identified strategy at a time); 3) employ continuous coaching cycles (with actionable feedback); 4) monitor and measure effective use of strategies.

Note: A broader consideration to begin, in the short term, is to address classroom management. Thought of by some as relating mainly to discipline, classroom management actually encompasses much more. In fact, in its truest form, classroom management addresses preparation, organization, academic expectations, behavior expectations, and instructional methods and strategies. Together, these are proactive rather than reactive practices that promote academic success while building self-regulation. A reference for school leadership is "Classroom Techniques for Creating Conditions for Rigorous Instruction" by Cleary, Morgan, and Marzano (2018). Again, urgency requires incremental changes be commenced sooner rather than later.

⁶ Nye, B., Konstantopoulos, S., & Hedges, L. V. (2004). How Large Are Teacher Effects? *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 26(3), 237-257. doi:10.3102/01623737026003237

⁷ See for example: Shakman, K., Bailey, J., & Breslow, N. (2017, February). A Primer for Continuous Improvement in Schools and Districts. Retrieved March 1, 2018, from https://www.edc.org/sites/default/files/uploads/primer_for_continuous_improvement.pdf

Recommendation 3

Analyze attendance data and develop a viable plan of action to reduce the number of chronic student absences. Use results to engage community partners in efforts to remove attendance barriers, solicit resources, and educate all stakeholders about the importance of daily attendance.

Aligned Domain(s) from the “5 Essentials for School Improvement” Framework

- Effective Leaders
- Ambitious Instruction
- Supportive Environment
- Collaborative Teachers
- Family Involvement

Rationale

Behavior problems, failure of core academic courses, and chronic absenteeism are three critical early warning signs for dropout.⁸ One study, conducted over a six-year period, revealed that the higher the percentage of unexcused absences elementary school students had, the more ineffective the students became academically, particularly in the areas of reading and mathematics.⁹ To be sure, there is a definitive nexus between attendance and achievement. For these reasons, Indiana law requires students between the ages of 7 and 18 years of age to attend school “each year for the number of days public schools are in session.” (IC 20-33-2-5 and IC 20-33-2-6)

Data for Cannelton Elementary and High School show an attendance rate ranging from 91.7% to 93.9% since the 2013-2014 school year. The compares to a state attendance rate of 95.8%. Students who missed 10 or more days of school ranged from 36-45 during those years. The number of students who missed 10 percent or more of the school year ranged from 34 in 2013-2014 to 50 during the past year. The latter are significant given the corporation enrollment is 261 students. Half of the respondents to the teacher survey disagreed or strongly disagreed that the school has effective measures for promoting good attendance, eliminating truancy, and tardiness. Without question, then, this requires urgent and evidence-based intervention.

Research reveals parental involvement and family structure, such as socio-economic status and parenting skills, are significant factors related to student attendance, particularly in the elementary grades.¹⁰ Conditions such as lack of access to health care, transportation, housing instability, and homelessness are inherent in these. Factors at school such as the culture and climate, capacity to meet individual students’ academic needs, and magnitude of social emotional supports also factor into student absenteeism. Thus, the complex nature of chronic absenteeism requires a coherent approach to minimize it. A widely accepted such approach is a comprehensive multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) that incorporates prevention, early and consistent interventions, and engagement with community partners.

⁸ *Improving Student Achievement by Addressing Chronic Absence* (pp. 1-5, Issue brief). (2010). CA: California School Boards Association.

⁹ Bradley, R. R. (2015). *A Comprehensive Approach to Improving Student Attendance* (Doctoral dissertation, St. John Fisher College, 2015). Rochester, NY: Fisher Digital Publications.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

To begin, the school should identify local root causes of chronic absenteeism, remembering that processes put in place to address this issue are part of the school's systemic approach to school improvement. Thus, they should align with the identified values of the school community.

In developing a sustainable prevention/intervention system, the school should consider avenues for addressing both school-related (e.g. climate, meeting students' academic needs) and non-school-related (e.g. homelessness, poverty) factors, being mindful that the school has control over that which occurs at school but only influences non-school-related matters. Still, such influence when joining with community partners can go a long way in positively affecting families even beyond matters of school attendance. The school might consider referring to resources such as those provided by the Indiana Department of Education for MTSS (<https://www.doe.in.gov/school-improvement/multi-tiered-system-supports>), the Office of School Improvement's Resource Hub (<https://www.doe.in.gov/school-improvement/siresourcehub>), and resources through the Attendance Works (<https://www.attendanceworks.org/>). The school will find one toolkit from the latter in the Office of School Improvement's Resource Hub. Given the far-reaching and long-lasting effects that chronic absence has on students and the broader community, it is recommended this issue be given prompt attention.

VIII. Appendix A: Evidence and Ratings for Supportive Environment and Involved Families

Background

We believe it is valuable for school and district leaders to have a summary of the TAT’s findings and evidence for all five of the domains in the “5 Essentials for School Improvement” Framework. As such, this section of the report provides a rating as well as key findings and supporting evidence for the Supportive Environment and Involved Families Domains.

This information is intentionally provided in an appendix to reinforce the importance of the previously stated findings, evidence, ratings, and recommendations for the school and district’s prioritized domains in the “5 Essentials for School Improvement” Framework.

Domain from the “5 Essentials for School Improvement” Framework: Supportive Environment			
Evidence Sources			
School leader self-evaluation; school improvement plan, documents provided by the school, student focus group, teacher focus group, caregiver focus group, community focus group, meeting with district leadership, meeting with instructional leadership, and meeting with principal			
Rating			
1 <u>Ineffective</u>	2 <u>Improvement Necessary</u>	3 <u>Effective</u>	4 <u>Highly Effective</u>
<i>Insufficient evidence of this happening in the school</i>	<i>Limited evidence of this happening in the school</i>	<i>Routine and consistent</i>	<i>Exceeds standard and drives student achievement</i>
Evidence Summary			
Strengths		Aligned “5Essentials” Framework Indicator(s)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence exists that many students take pride in their school and adhere to the behavioral expectations in place to promote a safe and equitable learning environment. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.2, 3.3 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many teachers and students engage with each other in manner that reflects positive relationships and mutual respect. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.4 	
Areas for Improvement		Aligned “5Essentials” Framework Indicator(s)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> During the visit, students were called to the office numerous times throughout the day, disrupting the flow of instruction in classrooms. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> According to focus group discussions and the School Leader’s Self-Evaluation, students are allowed to “opt out” of completing work/demonstrating understanding of standards-based objectives. This demonstrates low expectations for adhering to values promoting academic achievement. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3.2 	

**Domain from the “5 Essentials for School Improvement” Framework:
Involved Families**

Evidence Sources

School leader self-evaluation; school improvement plan, documents provided by the school, student focus group, teacher focus group, caregiver focus group, community focus group, meeting with district leadership, meeting with instructional leadership, and meeting with principal.

Rating

1 <u>Ineffective</u>	2 <u>Improvement Necessary</u>	3 <u>Effective</u>	4 <u>Highly Effective</u>
<i>Insufficient evidence of this happening in the school</i>	<i>Limited evidence of this happening in the school</i>	<i>Routine and consistent</i>	<i>Exceeds standard and drives student achievement</i>

Evidence Summary

Strengths

**Aligned “5Essentials”
Framework Indicator(s)**

- While there is limited evidence of coordinated, collaborative partnerships between the school and community, community members expressed a desire and willingness to work more closely with the school to support students’ learning and college and career readiness.
- Based on focus group discussions and analysis of surveys, caregivers feel welcome at school and supported by their children’s teachers.

- 5.3
- 5.1

Areas for Improvement

**Aligned “5Essentials”
Framework Indicator(s)**

- Based on focus group discussion with school staff, students, caregivers, and the community, there is limited evidence of coordinated collaboration between the school and community partners.
- Although student attendance rules are clearly explained in the elementary and high school student handbooks, no coherent process for addressing and decreasing the number of chronically absent students is in place.

- 5.3
- 5.2