

School Improvement Plan Template and School Audit Tool

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School Improvement Plan Template

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Cover Page	p. 4
Section 1: Needs Analysis	p. 5
Section 2: Overarching SMART Goals	.....	p. 6
Section 3: Talent	.....	p. 6
Section 4: Academics	.....	p. 7
Section 5: Culture and Climate	.....	p. 7
Section 6: Operations	.....	p. 8
Section 7: Stakeholder Engagement	.....	p. 8
Section 8: Implementation Timeline	.....	p. 9

Appendix A: School Audit Tool	p. 11



School Improvement Plan Cover Page

Local Education Agency:		
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Danbury High School		
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School Improvement Plan

Directions: Provide a comprehensive, bold, and transformative plan to dramatically improve student achievement. Identify school strengths and growth areas, and use this analysis to inform the selection of school goals and reform strategies. Articulate strategies to advance school performance in the areas of talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations.

<p>Section 1: Needs Analysis. The school must provide a thorough needs analysis informed by the school audit tool. In the space provided:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summarize the school’s greatest strengths. • Summarize and provide a root cause analysis for the school’s most significant growth areas. • Complete and submit Appendix A: School Audit Tool to inform the needs analysis. 	
Strength:	Explanation and data to substantiate:
Instructional leadership	Danbury High School has partnered with the Nellie Mae Foundation and one of the grant requirements is an external evaluation by EDC of our student-centered practices. EDC conducted focus groups with teachers and students, observed classes, and surveyed teachers and students. The information contained in that report was also utilized as part of the needs analysis. The report highlighted the strength of the administrative team in leading change efforts to impact student achievement.
Professional development	Professional development surveys are completed at the conclusion of each session. Additionally, the entire faculty is surveyed in June to determine professional development needs for the following school year. A calendar is published with dates and topics before the end of the school year so that end-of-year conferences can include initial conversation about teacher growth goals and supporting strategies. Professional development is offered 3 weeks out of every month by our job-embedded professional developers and Special Education Dept. Head. Sessions are held one day after school a week and then repeated another day during lunch periods to accommodate staff schedules. In addition to the district professional development program, DHS also utilizes our second contracted faculty meeting for teachers to work collaboratively in Data Teams.
Use of data	Data are regularly collected and analyzed to inform decisions. Attendance (student and staff), referral, discipline, adult inputs (e.g., dominant instructional elements, degree of student-centeredness, level of questioning), course pass rates, benchmark assessments, and legacy test results are routinely analyzed. All recent improvement efforts made have a foundational data set that was used to guide strategy design and midcourse correction, as needed. This year, we will be utilizing STAR as a benchmark and progress monitoring tool for all 9 th grade, 9R, ESL and SPED students.
Growth Area:	Explanation and data to substantiate:



<p>Academic rigor</p>	<p>In 2013-14, the Instructional Development Team, comprised of district leadership, conducted an Instructional Review in the fall and spring. During the Review, every teacher was scheduled to be visited and team members observed the entire period to see bell-to-bell instruction. Findings indicate that there is additional work to be done to ensure every class is challenging all students and holding them accountable for higher-order thinking.</p> <p>The School Data Team, comprised of representatives from each department, analyzes course pass rates, attendance, and suspension data.</p> <p>We will continue our focus this year on BOE Goals to improve student performance on argumentative writing and problem solving. During Data Rounds, administrators and Dept. Heads will collect information on frequency of instruction in support of the aforementioned goals.</p>
<p>Differentiation</p>	<p>Data Rounds are a monthly process whereby administrators and department heads visit every classroom to collect data on implementation of school focal points (e.g., student-centered lessons, differentiation) and provide teachers with regular feedback. These data are used formatively and not evaluatively. Data are collected at the department level, reviewed by the School Data and Administrative Leadership Team, and shared by teacher representatives in department meetings. Differentiation is an area that continues to be a focus for DHS and has been since the school was de-tracked and an open enrollment policy was put in place.</p>
<p>Instructional practice</p>	<p>School Governance Council met monthly and analyzed student attendance and course pass rates.</p> <p>Monthly Data Rounds shows continued work is needed in the area of higher-order questioning and student-centered practices (although significant growth has been noted).</p>
<p>Support for special populations</p>	<p>The Danbury High School leadership team meets weekly to analyze attendance and referral/discipline data. On a quarterly basis, we review Instructional Data Team Common Formative Assessment results and course pass rates.</p> <p>The Deans of Student Support, who provide strategic support to our at-risk and repeat freshmen, regularly analyze attendance, credit accrual, course pass rates, and discipline data for these special populations. While data reflect significant improvements with both at-risk and repeat freshmen, there is still much room for improvement when comparing their performance to the freshmen.</p> <p>This year we will be providing intensive professional development to support co-teachers. SERC will be providing PD and then onsite observations and follow up coaching to improve our instruction and support for students in special education. The SPED Department Head will be providing voluntary, monthly PD to continue supporting staff in between sessions.</p>
<p>Family engagement</p>	<p>Despite efforts to engage families, we continue to struggle with getting regular participation from parents/guardians. PTO meetings generally have</p>

	<p>less than 10 parents participate. However, we have seen an increase in the number of families participating in ESL Open House (50 attendees this spring is an increase from 30 the year before).</p>
<p>Section 2: Overarching SMART Goals. Successful and sustainable turnaround requires a focused approach on the school's most pressing needs and challenges. Please reflect upon school data and the school audit to identify a manageable set of priorities to guide the school's turnaround efforts. Develop three goals for the turnaround process that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented and Time-bound.</p>	
<p>Goal #1: 70% increase on Spring 2016 benchmark from Fall 2015 benchmark in all tested areas for the whole group.</p> <p>60% increase on Spring 2016 benchmark from Fall 2015 benchmark in all tested areas for the following subgroups: Asian, Black, Hispanic, ELL, FRL, and SPED.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Specific <input type="checkbox"/> Measurable <input type="checkbox"/> Attainable <input type="checkbox"/> Results-oriented <input type="checkbox"/> Time-bound</p>
<p>Goal #2: 5% decrease in number of All, White, Asian, Black, and SPED students with 20 or more absences for the 2014-2015 school year, based on 2012-2013 baseline data.</p> <p>5% decrease in the number of Hispanic, ELL, and FRL students with 20 or more absences for the 2014-2015 school year, based on 2012-2013 baseline data.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Specific <input type="checkbox"/> Measurable <input type="checkbox"/> Attainable <input type="checkbox"/> Results-oriented <input type="checkbox"/> Time-bound</p>
<p>Goal #3: 5% decrease in the number of ninth graders who are retained for the 2015-2016 school year, based on 2011-2012 baseline data.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Specific <input type="checkbox"/> Measurable <input type="checkbox"/> Attainable <input type="checkbox"/> Results-oriented <input type="checkbox"/> Time-bound</p>
<p>Section 3: Talent. The school must employ systems and strategies to recruit, hire, develop, evaluate, and retain excellent school leaders, teachers, and support staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how the district and school will cultivate a professional learning environment to attract, support, develop, and retain high-quality teachers and leaders. • Explain how administrators will have the ability to staff the school based exclusively on student and programmatic needs. • Describe how teachers will be evaluated on an annual basis to inform professional development offerings and staffing decisions. • Explain how administrators will be evaluated on an annual basis to inform leadership staffing decisions. Describe ongoing supports and coaching opportunities for school leadership. 	
<p>DPS has a lower salary scale than surrounding towns so attracting and retaining teachers to the area can be a challenge. This year the district, with representation from DHS, attended a job fair at UCONN to scout for new talent with a particular emphasis on finding minority applicants. New teachers are given a one-week orientation before the start of school and are assigned a mentor. DHS begins hiring as soon as openings are announced so there is enough time to find the right person. The hiring process was revised to require all candidates to provide a writing sample and do a demonstration lesson. The interview committee always includes leadership and teachers from the department. In addition to TEAM and district support, DHS provides monthly professional development to all new teachers that is delivered by teacher leaders. All new staff receive at least 5 coaching sessions with their Department Head and can ask for formative feedback from any observer at any time.</p>	

DHS creates a new schedule for students every year. The master schedule is built exclusively on student requests and staffing is adjusted to meet student needs. The administration has the autonomy to determine how to use staffing (e.g., cut position from one department to move to another). Within the Full-time Employee (FTE) count, administration has made adjustments to class size for certain populations and critical courses.

Teachers and administrators are both evaluated in accordance with the DPS Teacher Evaluation and Professional Learning requirements. This plan represents a shift in teacher evaluation that places an emphasis on teacher development and provides the structure and process to integrate professional practice and student performance. In 2014, DPS adopted Robert Marzano's *The Art and Science of Teaching Framework* as a model of exemplary instructional practices and tools that allow teachers to set personal goals to improve their practice. Administrators utilize the *School Leaders Framework*. Both frameworks include an online platform that supports discussion boards and includes a library of supporting materials and videos connected to the framework. New teachers have three full formal observations with pre and post conferences, in addition to six mini-observations each year. Tenured, proficient staff have at least one full formal observation with pre and post conferences, in addition to six mini-observations a year (this far exceeds the required minimum). Teachers and administrators both participate in goal-setting meetings to determine focus areas of growth for the year. To support teachers and administrators with adopting the new model, the district also purchased online modules to support teachers and administrators who wish to learn at their own pace. This year the administrative team will continue to work with Kim Marshall on strategies to support teacher growth through observation. Lastly, the district hired a Principal Coach/External Validator to support administrators in the implementation of the new framework.

Section 4: Academics. The school must design and implement a rigorous, aligned, and engaging academic program that allows all students to achieve at high levels:

- Describe the school's literacy strategy, including targeted interventions.
- Describe how staff will use data to inform lesson plans, differentiate instruction, and provide remedial support to meet the academic development needs of all students.
- Describe ongoing professional development opportunities to build staff capacity around the collection, analysis, and use of data to drive and differentiate instruction.

Teachers in Data Teams create CFAs and then meet to collaboratively analyze results and plan lessons according to student need. Next year, this will happen more frequently as the district calendar now reflects early release days twice a month. Department meetings will be scheduled in conjunction with these days to provide teachers with a 2-hour block of time to engage in collaborative reflection and planning.

DHS has an SRBI framework that requires teachers to implement and record two in-class interventions for any student who is in danger of failing. Students who receive two failing grades in a marking period are designated to be in need of Tier 2 Intervention. In addition to a parent/guardian meeting, students are also withdrawn from study hall and/or an elective and are scheduled into the Student Tutoring Center (STC). Freshmen who are in danger of failing are scheduled into Directed Study Hall in the Freshman Academy. Any student can refer him/herself to the STC during an off period or after school. The STC is staffed with a certified teacher and content interventionists who work with students in small groups.

Incoming freshmen who are at or below the basic level in middle school in reading or math are required to take foundational support classes in addition to their regular prescribed courses. ESL 3 students take English 1 concurrently on a pass/fail basis. This year, we will be piloting a new English curriculum with intensive reading support that is embedded in the program. Students will take English 1+ for 2 credits and receive remedial



reading support while gaining English credit. We have also revised Math Lab so that it is taught by two teachers to provide consistency and common planning for teachers to support each other. STAR assessments will be implemented for all 9th graders, ELL and SPED students so we can monitor the progress of these at-risk populations more closely.

DHS will be the second school in the state to open an Early College Opportunity program. We are slotted to open Danbury Early College Opportunity (DECO) academy in August 2015 with an inaugural class of 100 ninth graders who will be eligible to graduate in as few as four years with a high school diploma and an Associate Degree in Informational Technology. Students will participate in internships, be supported by a mentor, and be first in line for interviewing for IT positions at New Oak, our community partner.

A professional development calendar is published with dates and topics before the end of the school year so that end-of-year conferences can include initial conversation about teacher growth goals and supporting strategies. Professional development is offered 3 weeks out of every month by job-embedded staff developers. Sessions are held one day after school a week and then repeated another day during lunch periods to accommodate staff schedules.

Section 5: Culture and Climate. The school must foster a positive learning environment that supports high-quality teaching and learning, and engages families and the community as partners in the educational process:

- Describe the school's behavior management system and strategies to shape a positive school culture.
- Explain how the school will promote strong family and community connections to support academic achievement.

There are four assistant principals and one School Climate Specialist who manage discipline referrals. There is a DHS Discipline Code that is used effectively to ensure that infractions are handled the same way for the same offenses. A progressive approach is utilized and students are referred to the Crisis Counselor when needed. Consistency and support are the keys to the positive school climate at DHS. The Discipline Code and other important school information are included in our Student Handbook that is translated into Spanish and Portuguese. The Handbook is reviewed with students at the beginning of the year and parents are made aware of it via School Messenger calls, website, and the Principal's Newsletter.

Several evening events are held throughout the year to build and strengthen connections. Open House, ESL Open House, Incoming Freshman Orientation, summer tours, financial aid assistance (in English and in Spanish), summer acceleration program, and student-led conferences are just a few examples of ways DHS engages families.

DHS has an advisory program to support strong connections. Students meet weekly in advisory and remain with the same teacher and group of students for the duration of their time at DHS to support personalized learning. Student Success Plans are created each year and stored in Naviance so information can be shared with staff and families.

This year, a committee of DHS volunteers will be creating an SRBI Framework to support students with behavioral issues. Deans of Student Support will continue to work with at-risk 9th graders and students who are repeating 9th grade. Advisory has been revised to include a focus on Dweck's research on growth mindsets to support student resiliency. A special study hall has been created for repeat 9th graders so counselors can push in to do group work with this population.

Section 6: Operations. The school must create systems and processes that promote organizational efficiency and effectiveness, including through the use of time and financial resources:



- Describe the length of the school day and year for students, and describe how the proposed schedule will maximize instructional time on task.
- Describe the length of the school day and year for staff, including additional time before and during the school year for professional development and/or common planning time.

School starts at 7:05 for staff and 7:20 for students. School ends at 2:00 for students and 2:20 for staff. The Freshman Academy utilizes an A/B block to minimize transition and maximize instructional time. Currently, extended learning opportunities are available twice a week after school until 4:00 in our Student Tutoring Center. Late buses are provided to students. This plan seeks to expand the tutoring piloted in Twilight School last year. The program was a success and will be expanded this year to allow ESL students who transfer mid-semester to stay after school to regain time so that credit can be awarded.

This year, many teachers who work in a co-taught capacity will be relieved from having an Advisory so that they have contractual time to engage in co-planning.

Section 7: Stakeholder Engagement. In the space provided, describe stakeholder engagement throughout the turnaround planning process. Provide evidence that school and district personnel, School Governance Council members, parents, students and community members were engaged in the planning process and/or are aware the contents of this plan.

The School Data Team (SDT), comprised of administrators, department heads, and teachers, met regularly this year to conduct data analysis and responsive strategies. Many improvement strategies that were discussed are reflected in this plan. The SDT will participate in monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of this plan throughout the 2015-2016 school year.

The School Governance Council (SGC), comprised of faculty, parents, community members, and students, has been extremely active in analyzing achievement and attendance data throughout the year. These subcommittees conducted monthly analyses of several data points germane to their focus. Many improvement strategies that were discussed are reflected in this plan.

The plan will be posted on our website and a School Messenger call will be made to apprise our community of its location. It will also be reviewed at the next PTO and SGC meetings for feedback.

Section 8: Implementation Timeline. Using the chart below, please summarize key strategies presented in this plan in the areas of talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations (add rows, as necessary). Identify progress metrics and when each strategy will be implemented.									
Strategy:	Progress Metric:	Year 1				Year 2			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
TALENT:									
Provide all teachers with job-embedded professional development to support Marzano framework and SIOP, as well as after school and “lunch and learn” sessions offered by job-embedded staff developers and SPED Department Head	Increase in percentage of teachers implementing student-centered strategies, as measured by Data Rounds	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
All administrators and department heads will participate in extensive professional development to support the implementation of the Marzano Instructional Framework, as part of the new teacher evaluation process. School-based follow up support will be provided in addition to the district schedule of coaching.	Increase in the inter-rater reliability of all evaluators, as measured by calibration exercises and collaborative classroom observations	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Strategic assignment of coaches to ensure that our struggling teachers have access to assistance in the areas of lesson development, delivery, and assessment.	Increase in the number of teachers working with coaches	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Provide at least 5 coaching sessions for new staff.	Increase in the number of new teachers who have a successful first year and return	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
ACADEMICS:									
Implement STAR assessment as universal screen and progress monitoring tool for 9 th graders, ESL and SPED students.	Increase in performance with ultimate goal of students achieving 40 SGP points	X		X	X	X		X	X
Provide department time for teachers to meet in Instructional Data Teams and assign administrators and department heads to each of the 27 teams to provide oversight. A system of data collection has been designed on Google Docs to allow for transparency and real-time feedback to Data Teams.	Improved CFA results, based on pre/post cycle	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Implement revised Math Lab with dedicated teachers who have common periods off	Improved foundational math skills for participating students	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Implement English 1+, credit-bearing course with remediation component.	Improved reading and writing, as	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

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Strategy:	Progress Metric:	Year 1				Year 2			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	measured by SRI and STAR								
The Deans of Student Support will continue to work with at-risk and retained students to provide more support and monitoring. Home visits, attendance contracts, and frequent parent meetings will occur with students, as needed.	Improved attendance for students who are assigned to Dean of Student Support caseload	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Directed Study Halls held in the Freshman Academy office where students will receive small group instruction from interventionists and support from guidance counselors, as needed.	Increase in the number of students who are successful in core courses after receiving Directed Study Hall support	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Open first DECO team as part of Freshman Academy.	Increase in the number of 9 th graders who stay on track for graduation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Organize Instructional Rounds for teachers interested in visiting colleague's classrooms to support sharing of best practice. Offered initially to Data Team leaders and then others as space allows.	Increase in the number of teachers conducting peer observations and incorporating new techniques	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Embedded staff developers will offer monthly professional development after school and repeat session during lunch periods.	Increase in the number of targeted techniques being implemented	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Target professional development and coaching support to assist teachers with strategies to support BOE goals of improving argumentative writing and problem solving. Literacy strategies will be the focus of departmental PD efforts and draft district rubrics for problem solving will be field tested this year.	Increase in the frequency of instructional episodes that provide students scaffolds to improve argumentative writing and problem solving skills	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
CULTURE AND CLIMATE:									
Guidance Data Team will meet formally once a month with administration to monitor the impact of attendance strategies with students who are chronically absent and/or have multiple course failures. Suggested growth goal is reduction of students with chronic absenteeism and/or AWOLs from class.	Increase in the number of Tier 2 meetings, decrease in the numbers of students who are chronically absent and/or AWOL	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Frequent monitoring to ensure that the SRBI protocol for students with attendance issues is followed. Administration will review data monthly and follow up with counselors and attendance office as needed.	Increase in the number of SRBI Tier 2 meetings	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Section 8: Implementation Timeline. Using the chart below, please summarize key strategies presented in this plan in the areas of talent, academics, culture and climate, and operations (add rows, as necessary). Identify progress metrics and when each strategy will be implemented.									
Strategy:	Progress Metric:	Year 1				Year 2			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Utilize School Messenger System to call home twice a day when students are absent. Translated into Spanish or Portuguese, as needed.	Decrease in the number of unexcused absences	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Provide additional outreach evening sessions. Distribute calendar of all DHS night events to families.	Improved parent/guardian satisfaction on school communication indicators	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
School Climate Specialist will support administration by processing student referrals and build relationships with students	Decreased number of ISS and OSS	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
OPERATIONS:									
Incoming repeat freshmen and any student with more than 1 failure in a core course who has a study hall will be scheduled into a Directed Study Hall, held in the Student Tutoring Center.	Decrease in the number of students with multiple course failures	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Student Tutoring Center staffed with 4 interventionists, certified teacher, and overseen by Student Tutoring Center Manager. Available to any student who needs assistance, every period of the day and 2 days after school with a late bus. Credit recovery software is available for students to utilize as additional support.	Increased participation in after-school support sessions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Eliminate one faculty meeting a month to provide additional time for staff to work in Data Teams.	Increase in the number of minutes staff have to collaborate	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Continue Twilight School for 9 th grade students who are behind in credits for semester 2 in English & Biology (based on historical pass rates). Twilight School will start after regular dismissal and students will stay for 2 hours after the end of the school day with certified teachers in a blended learning environment.	Decrease in the number of retained students			X	X			X	X
Begin Twilight School for incoming ESL students who arrive to DHS too late to earn credit. Specific course offering TBD based on student need.	Increase in the number of ESL students attaining credit	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

