



March 26, 2010

Jean Peterson, Superintendent
Martensdale-St. Marys Community School District
Box 350
390 Burlington
Martensdale, Iowa 50160

Dear Superintendent Peterson:

Attached is the report of findings for the Comprehensive School Improvement Site Visit at Martensdale-St. Marys Community School District on February 9, 10, and 11, 2010. The report is based upon interviews conducted with district administrators, teachers, and support staff, parents, students, community partners, advisory committee members, and board members, as well as a review of documents.

The site visit was designed to assess progress with the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP), provide a general assessment of educational practices within the district, make recommendations for improvement, and determine compliance with accreditation standards and federal program requirements (as applicable).

Based on the findings from a comprehensive site visit, including a desk audit, on-site document review, and interviews, the Martensdale-St. Marys Community School District maintains State of Iowa accreditation upon resolution of non-compliance issues described in the Chapter 12 Non-compliance Matrix and the Outside of Chapter 12 Non-compliance Matrix included in the comprehensive site visit report. The district must complete corrective actions according to the timeline noted. DE follow-up will be conducted to verify resolution of all noted non-compliance issues.

The report reflects consensus of the following team members:

Department of Education Representatives:

Sandra Dop, 21st Century Skills Consultant
Julie Melcher, School Improvement Consultant
Peggy Van Kirk, Special Education Cadre

Area Education Agency Representatives:

Kathy Allison, Special Education Program Assistant
Carla Grasty, Professional Learning and Leadership Consultant
Dave Wood, Partnership Director

Local Education Agency Representatives:

Cynthia Jensen, Elementary Principal and Curriculum Director, Adair-Casey CSD
Stephanie Wilson, Director of Teaching and Learning, Diocese of Des Moines Schools

It is our hope this report will provide guidance to enhance student achievement in the district and support continuing conversations among staff and community members about the local education system, how and what students are learning, and how *more* students can learn at higher levels.

As part of the Martensdale-St. Marys Community School District's continuous improvement process, the district must review its current CSIP and provide revisions as needed. Revisions should be based on district needs assessments (including the attached report), student achievement data, stakeholder input, and established priorities. Recertification of the CSIP must be completed by September 15th, 2010. Directions for revision and submission of the CSIP can be found at: <https://www.edinfo.state.ia.us/securelogin.asp>.

Feedback based on the district's visit experience to inform the DE's efforts to continuously improve the site visit process would be appreciated. A short online survey has been developed at the following site:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=DzavrdTJ9dG_2f_2fh3sB0Mb0g_3d_3d. It will take approximately ten minutes to complete. Responses are confidential and shared only in aggregate form with members of the DE School Improvement Team.

The visiting team again extends its gratitude to you and the district's staff and patrons in preparing for and showing courtesy during the visit. Thank you for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,



Julie Melcher
School Improvement Consultant
Bureau of Accreditation and Improvement Services
Iowa Department of Education



Del Hoover, Deputy Administrator
Bureau of Accreditation and Improvement Services
Iowa Department of Education

cc: Site Visit Team Members
School Board President
Iowa Department of Education Official File
AEA Office

Comprehensive Site Visit Iowa Department of Education



Martensdale – St. Marys Community School District

**Team Findings
February 9, 10, and 11, 2010**

Iowa Department of Education
Grimes State Office Building
400 E. 14th St
Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0146

Vision, Mission, and Goals

In an improving district/school, the vision, mission, and goals are clearly communicated in the school and community. Stakeholders understand and share a commitment to the district/school expectations, goals, priorities, assessment procedures, and accountability. The vision guides allocations of time and resources. Evidence includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Clearly articulated mission is established collaboratively with stakeholder groups representing the diversity of the community.
- Vision, mission, and goals are communicated throughout the system and community.
- The vision and mission of the district/school guide teaching and learning.
- Every five years, the comprehensive needs assessment process, with input from stakeholders, is used to review and revise the beliefs, mission, and/or vision; major educational needs; and student learning goals.
- Academic and academic-related data are analyzed and used to determine prioritized goals.
- Goals guide assessment of student achievement, district/school effectiveness, and the allocation of time and resources.
- The vision, mission, and goals support values of respecting and valuing diversity.

Noted Strengths:

1. School board members and district administrators reported beginning a re-visioning process last spring including a review of the district's mission statement through the guidance of the superintendent. The review was completed this past fall. The board reduced a lengthy mission statement to a concise statement: Building excellence, service, and character one student at a time. The mission is further enhanced with a vision statement and belief statements. Board members reported their commitment to revising the mission statement to something that could be easily communicated and understood by school staff, students, parents, and the community. The mission statement is the first thing viewers see when visiting the district's Web site.
2. Multiple interview groups reported administrators clearly articulate the vision, mission, and goals of the district and use them as guides for direction in decision-making at all levels:
 - General education teachers and learning support staff described how their programs embody the district's vision, mission, and goals. They build community so students feel safe. Students work in small groups to accomplish this. Teachers reported their belief in developing lifelong problem-solvers and the interrelationship of content in cross-curricular lessons. Teachers reported they strive for excellence and look for opportunities to practice critical thinking. They believe in application of knowledge and skills.
 - The Quality Support Committee (QSC) reported they had significant input into the revision of the vision, mission, and goals and use them in decision-making.

- Members of the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Advisory Committee were able to describe how they used the vision, mission, and goals when they made recommendations to administrators and the school board. Principals reported they “live” the district’s mission.

Recommendations for Improvement:

3. School board members and administrators reported commitment to ensuring all district stakeholders know and understand the district’s mission statement. While understanding of the district’s mission appears to be widespread based on interviews, a “next step” might be to develop an intentional communication plan that identifies “who” needs to know “what” by “when” and in “what ways.” An embedded and intentional communication plan could be used to ensure widespread understanding not only of the district’s mission statement, but all important district and building information about programs, and initiatives. In the development of the communication plan, include identifying who will take responsibility for implementing and monitoring specific actions in the plan. Such attention to communication could contribute to the seamless transmission of all important information and develop ownership among stakeholders.

Leadership

In an improving district/school, leaders communicate a shared sense of purpose and understanding of the district/school's values. Leaders have a visible presence, provide resources and ensure two-way communication between the educational system and stakeholders. Leaders provide encouragement, recognition, and support for improving student learning and staff performance. Leadership is committed, persistent, proactive, and distributed throughout the system. Evidence includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Policies and procedures are established to effectively support district/school operations.
- The school board and district/school administrators implement an evaluation system that provides for the professional growth of all personnel.
- Policies and practices are implemented to reduce and eliminate discrimination and harassment and to reflect, respect, and celebrate diversity.
- The role and responsibility of administrative leaders is supported, respected, and understood.
- A clearly defined system and expectations are established for the collection, analysis, and use of data regarding student achievement and progress with the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP).
- The capacity of staff, students, and parents to contribute and lead is built and supported.
- Opportunities for participation are provided for input, feedback, and ownership for student and system success among staff, students, parents, and community.
- Equity in access to learning opportunities and compliance with local, state, and federal legislation is ensured.
- Leaders at all levels understand and manage the change process.

Noted Strengths:

4. School board members reported using a continuous feedback loop process for making decisions. The superintendent and principals provide information regarding education trends, legislation, and changes in day-to-day activities. Information gained is placed onto a list of tactical possibilities that is reviewed by the Quality Support Committee (QSC). They in turn provide input. Administrators synthesize the input and present a recommendation to the school board. The school board approves and implementation begins. Results are monitored. The district's Advisor/Advisee program was proposed through this process. Use of the continuous feedback loop was reported as providing consistency throughout the system.
5. School board members reported the superintendent maintains focus on the district's mission and is strategic in planning and implementing change. She was described as keeping focus to a greater extent on instructional leadership with appropriate focus on management issues. The superintendent has set professional goals and developed an action plan and seeks input from the board regarding her progress. The superintendent has mentored the district's principals according to this ethic.

6. School board members reported each of them serve on two district committees. Committees include Transportation, Facilities, Wellness, Employee Relations, Quality Support Committee (QSC), Warren County Board, and Madison County Board. Board members report updates and recommendations from these committees at each school board meeting.
7. When asked how the school board monitors the fiscal health of the district and how district financial information is communicated to the public, school board members reported detailed financial information is studied by board members before each board meeting. They also stated the superintendent regularly provides easily understood financial information to the public through articles she writes for the district's monthly newsletter. School board members also participate in training and engage in professional reading to deepen their understanding of school finance.
8. Students, parents, teachers, and support staff reported receiving support from district administrators. Examples included the following:
 - Teacher committees engage in meaningful work and make real contributions to decisions (e.g., a teacher identified books for study that were used for professional development).
 - Student Council members provided input on the bullying and harassment policy.
 - The Quality Support Committee (QSC) reported several suggestions that were enacted over the years (e.g., recommended an addition to the school facility).
 - Middle school students reported when they have concerns, administrators address them (e.g., using community resources to respond to students' needs).
9. The Quality Support Committee reported involvement in school decisions. Examples included the following:
 - Expressed ownership in district's future
 - Assisted in writing the district's vision, mission, and goal statements
 - Made recommendations for the Annual Progress Report (APR) goals which were then adopted by the board
 - Recommended additional advanced math courses resulting in the district hiring a half-time math teacher
10. Leadership is developed at all levels of the system. Examples included the following:
 - Students, grades 7-12, reported being members of Student Council, an opportunity to learn and demonstrate leadership skills. Student Council members participate in an annual Retreat Day. Retreat Day provided an opportunity for students to assist in formalizing the district's anti-bullying and harassment policy.
 - Teachers reported the ability to select committees of interest on which to serve. They assume leadership roles within the committees. They reported knowing their contributions were valued.

- Teachers lead curriculum development writing and alignment of current curriculum to the Iowa Core.
11. The district has made significant progress with teacher evaluation since the district's last accreditation site visit in May 2005. Administrators and teachers reported effective evaluation practices have been established:
- Documentation of the teacher evaluation process demonstrated thorough and detailed processes and written evaluations incorporating multiple walk-through notes, formal pre and post observation conferencing, written teacher reflection, and constructive evaluator feedback, including specific attention to the district's vision, mission, and goals.
 - Teachers reported evaluator feedback was helpful toward improvement of their instructional practices.
 - The superintendent reported principals were evaluated annually through a process that utilizes the Iowa Standards for School Leaders.
12. Multiple interview groups reported the administrative team is visible and accessible. They reported open, frequent communication with the administrative team. Communication occurs through the monthly district newsletter, monthly and semi-annual meetings, informal conversations, lunch meetings, and quick responses to email and phone calls. Interview groups reported parent involvement is encouraged through opportunities such as volunteering in schools, participating in the elementary Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO) and the secondary Principal Advisory.

Recommendations for Improvement:

13. Learning support staff reported informal collaboration has been a standard procedure in developing their approach to identifying and providing needed services for At-Risk students. It is recommended, however, that the district develop a systemic, formal, documented approach to identifying individual and group needs through the support structures of the At-Risk program. For example, while the Building Assistance Team (BAT) meets regularly at the elementary level, the secondary BAT appears to meet less often and with less documentation. At the secondary level, the BAT Worksheet indicates no designation of follow-up activities, who is designated to follow-up, or when a follow-up meeting is scheduled. Because these procedures do not appear to be established, it is possible that one person may be taking disproportionate responsibility for student follow-up. While there may be reasons for this, the BAT is encouraged to distribute responsibility among all team members, document who is taking which identified actions, and document the results of these actions. Additionally, administrative support is encouraged for PreK-12 guidance counselors and at-risk teachers meeting regularly to continuously monitor progress of program components. Consider contacting the district's Partnership Director, Anita Westerhaus (awesterhaus@aea11.k12.ia.us, 515-270-9030), to coordinate assistance. While continued improvement is needed in this area, the district has made significant progress since its last accreditation site visit in May 2005.
14. While many non-instructional support staff reported they were evaluated regularly, they indicated more specific feedback would assist in improving their performance.

A review of the non-instructional support staff evaluation tool demonstrated general points of job performance were addressed. The district is encouraged to review the evaluation instrument for non-instructional support staff to determine the level of alignment between the instrument and specific job descriptions. A “next step” would be to revise the evaluation tool incorporating specific job functions for each position.

15. School board members reported an informal process for acclimating new board members to their role. Board members collected information about what board members need to know and be able to do and addressed these issues with new members joining the board this school year. School board members also reported recognition of the need to continue improving new board member induction. Consider the following suggestions:

- Provide a workshop for school board candidates prior to election to clarify the role of board members.
- Provide resources to assist in developing boardsmanship skills after election.
- Focus on sections of the Iowa Association of School Board’s board member handbook at each board meeting.
- Meet periodically with board members of neighboring school districts or nearby districts of similar size to network and discover how other school boards are dealing with similar concerns.
- Develop a school board member induction plan.
- Contact the district’s Partnership Director from Heartland AEA to coordinate assistance from Heartland to conduct a school board retreat.

Collaborative Relationships

In an improving district/school, stakeholders understand and support the mission and goals of the district/school and have meaningful roles in the decision-making process. Collaboration results from a culture of participation, responsibility, and ownership among stakeholders from diverse community groups. Educators in the system develop and nurture a professional culture and collaborative relationships marked by mutual respect and trust inside and outside of the organization. The system works together with balance between district direction and school autonomy. Evidence includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Instructional staff is provided opportunities for interaction to focus on professional issues.
- Instructional staff constructively analyzes and critiques practices and procedures including content, instruction, and assessment.
- Instructional staff follows established procedures to resolve professional conflicts, solve problems, share information about students, and communicate student information to parents.
- Processes and procedures that invite and respect stakeholder input, support, and interaction are implemented by the district/school.
- Parents are involved as partners in the educational process.
- Positive alliances among school staff, students, parents, and diverse community groups are created and nurtured.

Noted Strengths:

16. School board members and the superintendent reported meeting with Warren county school district boards of education annually. Legislators are invited. Participants gained greater insight into the impact of legislation on each school district.
17. PreK-12 learning support staff reported teachers and counselors in the Guidance, At-Risk, and School- Within- a- School programs formally and informally coordinate efforts to ensure the success of each and every student. This includes the elementary character education program that is responsive to students' character development and affective needs. Staff reported the secondary guidance counselor assists in the implementation of the At-Risk and Advisor/Advisee programs. Learning support staff provides support for each other and their programs while meeting the needs of students.
18. District administrators and teachers reported special education teachers meet monthly to discuss progress monitoring graphs and problem solve for students not making progress toward Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals. This meeting is attended by Heartland AEA representatives and building administrators.
19. District administrators reported collaborating with Heartland AEA staff and working with special education teachers to review the IEP meeting structure and the role of all teachers in the process. Attention was given to the "Parent Requests" section of the ***Procedures At A Glance*** manual. Work has also been done to implement

procedures that limit access to special education records and determine eligibility to access these records.

20. Multiple groups reported the district provides many opportunities for formal and informal collaboration. Examples included the following:
- Time built into the schedule for teachers in grades 7-12 to collaborate during the school day
 - Professional development collaboration time provided twice a month for all teachers
 - PK-6 teachers' common preparation time with grade level peers
 - Incidental conversations throughout the building
21. Positive alliances among school staff, students, parents, and diverse community groups are created and nurtured. Examples included the following:
- QSC
 - Athletic and Music Booster clubs
 - PTO
 - Principal Advisory
 - Job shadowing opportunities and student study and research groups facilitated by professionals from the community
 - Pre-school screening by Brost and Associates (i.e., mental health and well-being screening with parental consent)
22. Multiple interview groups reported opportunities that invite and respect stakeholders' input, support, and interaction. Examples included the following:
- QSC
 - Monthly meeting between paraeducators and principals
 - Monthly meeting between special education teachers and administrators
 - Student council
 - Spontaneous, informal conversations

Recommendations for Improvement:

23. Based on a review of staff schedules, it appears PK-12 learning support staff who have responsibilities throughout the PK-12 system have limited scheduled time to collaborate with peers. For example, the teacher librarian's schedule provides time for collaboration with elementary teachers during monthly professional development sessions but not with secondary teachers. Additionally, the elementary and secondary guidance counselors' schedules do not demonstrate planned, scheduled time to collaborate. The district is encouraged to consider scheduling specific collaboration time for teachers with PK-12 assignments with all teachers as appropriate to the need. Set expectations and accountability for the use of collaboration time. Collaboration time would provide opportunities to share best practices and support teachers and students. While the district has made noticeable

improvement in focusing on teacher collaboration, continue to ensure equity in building collaborative relationships is intentional.

Learning Environment

In an improving district/school, the school environment is conducive to teaching and learning. The environment is safe, orderly, purposeful, and free from threat of physical, social, and emotional harm. Teachers are familiar with students' cultures and know how to work effectively in a multi-cultural setting. Students are guided to think critically about learning and have opportunities to apply learning to real world situations. Classrooms are integrated with diverse learners (i.e., gender, race, special needs, at-risk, gifted). Evidence includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Rules and procedures for behavior and consequences are clearly communicated and consistently administered.
- School facilities are physically accessible and school routines enhance student learning.
- Materials, resources, technology, programs, and activities reflecting diversity are available to all students.
- The district/school provides a clean, inviting, welcoming environment.
- A clearly understood crisis management plan is established, communicated, and implemented when necessary.
- Teaching and learning are protected from external disturbances and internal distractions.
- The district/school reflects the contributions and perspectives of diverse groups and preserves the cultural dignity of staff, students, and parents.

Noted Strengths:

24. Multiple interview groups reported the school environment is safe, orderly, purposeful, and free from threat of physical, social and emotional harm. Examples included the following:

- Zero tolerance policy regarding bullying and harassment
- Crisis management plan
- Anti-bullying and harassment policies
- Advisor/Advisee
- At-Risk program
- Guidance program
- Student health (i.e., school nurse)
- Character Counts
- Drug Awareness Resistance Education (DARE) program
- Playground safety alarm

25. Junior high and high school students reported they feel safe in school. They were able to communicate the procedure to be used if they need to address bullying or harassment. They stated conflicts are handled immediately by administrators. They also reported being comfortable addressing concerns or receiving assistance from staff and administrators.

26. Multiple interview groups reported feeling valued and respected by the district. Accomplishments are recognized and acknowledged. Examples included the following:
- “Gold Cards” for students’ positive behavior
 - Teacher notes and e-mails to parents
 - Summative evaluations
 - Teachers and administrators available to parents and students for concerns, tutoring, and questions
27. Junior high school students and principals reported benefits from the addition of the Advisor/Advisee program at the secondary level. The district has developed a curriculum for Advisor/Advisee. Teacher advisory leaders are provided lesson plans and accompanying student assignments. Additionally, principals stated that character education and the consistency in the administration of student discipline have led to a more orderly learning environment. Advisor/Advisee groups give students an opportunity to visit with peers and meet with teachers. A reduction in discipline reports has been attributed to efforts such as these.

Recommendations for Improvement:

28. The district could benefit from developing a plan to accelerate and support the capacity of all school staff, school board members, and students to better understand cultural competence and prepare for living and working in a diverse world. Consider how to expand the experiences and instruction available to students and staff to support diversity with the following suggestions:
- Cultural competency means awareness and understanding of multiple types of diversity which includes race/ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic status, families new to the district, gender, and varying student achievement levels. Through study and dialogue, develop a district definition of diversity and cultural competency with broad-based input.
 - Consider intentionally incorporating multi-cultural literature and virtual field trips throughout the curriculum, as well as Web Quests, Webinar, Skype, pen/key pals, Google Docs, and Google Maps.

The district is encouraged to contact its Partnership Director from Heartland AEA to coordinate ongoing assistance and resources for developing cultural competence.

29. Although the Advisor/Advisee groups have been beneficial, junior high school students stated concerns regarding the structure of these groups:
- Groups remain the same for three years (This was viewed by students as both positive and negative)
 - Inconsistency in implementation among the advisory groups
 - Limited variety of instructional activities from year to year

The district could consider seeking input from students in grades 7-12 regarding ways to improve the effectiveness of advisory groups. Additionally, consider analyzing Iowa Youth Survey data and other student behavior and social-emotional data to help determine and be intentional about what needs to be addressed through Advisor/Advisee. Use these data in planning next steps. For example, return to the purpose of initiating Advisor/Advisee. Identify program success indicators aligned with the goals of the program. Collect student behavior data (e.g., Iowa Youth Survey, secondary discipline data, attendance data, homework completion data, extra and co-curricular student participation data) and teacher implementation data aligned with the success indicators. Use these data to make decisions about continuance of the program or modifications that might be needed, such as developing a multi-year cycle of topics and activities to avoid duplication from year to year.

Curriculum and Instruction

In an improving district/school, curriculum challenges each student to excel, reflects a commitment to equity, and demonstrates an appreciation of diversity. There is an emphasis on principles of high quality instruction, clear expectations for what is taught, and high expectations for student achievement. Educators have a common understanding of quality teaching and learning. Instruction is designed to accommodate a wide range of learners within the classroom. Teachers have knowledge and skills need to effectively implement characteristics of effective instruction. The staff accepts responsibility for the students' learning of the essential curriculum (e.g., Iowa Core Curriculum). Instructional time is allocated to support student learning. Evidence includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Educators implement effective instructional practices for each and every student.
- School and classroom tasks and activities are inherently engaging, relevant, and lead to applying knowledge to authentic tasks.
- Content, instruction, assessments, and policy are aligned.
- A shared vision of effective instruction is held by all instructional staff.
- Curriculum and instruction reflect contributions from diverse racial, ethnic, and personal backgrounds.
- Students are provided opportunity and time to learn.
- Teachers are provided with an instructional framework that employs research-based strategies for use with diverse learner characteristics.
- Instructional decisions utilize a process of collecting, analyzing, and summarizing data.

Noted Strengths:

30. The administrative team and teachers have been proactive in learning about the Iowa Core Curriculum (ICC). Examples included the following:
 - Initial curriculum alignment work has been completed and a curriculum guidance matrix has been started.
 - An Iowa Core Curriculum Team (i.e., administrators and PK-12 teacher representatives) has been formed and has attended training each of the last two years.
 - The district's Iowa Core Curriculum Leadership Team has shared information with the school board, the QSC, and all teachers.
 - The district has completed the Iowa Core Curriculum Self-Studies for all six outcomes.
 - Time and resources have been allocated for ongoing work with the Iowa Core Curriculum.
31. Junior high and high school students reported appreciation for teachers and classes where all students have opportunities to be involved in learning. Examples included the following:

- Projects
- Discussions
- Debates
- Real life connections
- Teacher enthusiasm for curriculum
- Student goal setting and progress monitoring
- Expectations for learning

32. Multiple interview groups reported technology is used in the classroom to enhance student learning. High school students reported the use of technology in classrooms increases their motivation and engagement, explaining that access to a variety of technology increases the opportunity for more in-depth analysis and deeper understanding of the content being taught. Examples included the following:

- SmartBoards
- Classroom projectors
- Computers access
- Skype
- Wikis
- Blogs
- Teacher laptops
- PowerPoint presentations

33. Multiple interview groups reported Differentiated Instruction is in the beginning stages of implementation, PK-12. Teachers at all levels expressed a desire to reach out to each and every student and meet their needs. For example, elementary teachers use running records and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) data several times a year to regroup students.

34. District administrators reported they participated in the Special Education Academy offered through Heartland AEA. After attending, they worked with teachers to develop an IEP review checklist. Every year, principals, special education colleagues, and AEA staff randomly review student IEPs to ensure procedures are consistently implemented with fidelity.

Recommendations for Improvement:

35. High school students and parents reported their preference for hands-on activities to stimulate higher order thinking and apply student learning to the real world. Students and parents reported hands-on learning activities are inconsistently used across curricular areas. The district is encouraged to incorporate attention to the use of hands-on activities when planning for differentiated instruction. For example, consider asking Gifted and Talented (G/T), special education teachers, and CTE teachers to work with all teachers on differentiating classroom instruction through the use of hands-on activities.

36. Learning support staff reported satisfaction with the School-Within-a-School program and their hope to expand the program to serve junior high students. The district is encouraged to study all the learning and social-emotional supports provided through the educational, guidance, and at-risk programs. As each program is implemented with increasing integrity (e.g., IDM, professional development, guidance, character education), improved use of data will more accurately identify individual student needs. The result may be fewer students being identified for special programs and more students being provided targeted support earlier throughout the PreK-12 system. Additionally, ensure courses provided through the School-Within-a-School program are aligned with district standards and benchmarks and the Iowa Core Curriculum.
37. The district's definition of technological literacy is comprehensive in scope, including six broad categories to guide instruction and assessment; however, there is limited alignment between the intended technology curriculum and the assessment of skills. It is recommended the technology team review the district's technology assessment to determine when specific skills are taught and assessed. Not all skills need to be assessed at the eighth grade level. One option may be to align specific skills and assessments with grade level expectations, such as the Iowa Writing Project. Principals reported a concern that the keyboarding skills of sixth grade students may lower scores on the Iowa Writing Project. Consider reviewing and modifying technology expectations where curriculum support might be needed. Contact the district's Partnership Director from Heartland AEA to coordinate assistance with the AEA Instructional Technology Team.
38. Document review and interviews with CTE teachers did not verify that program-specific future planning and evaluation was discussed during CTE Advisory Council meetings. A CTE Advisory Council/Committee with active membership should have the following: focused agendas; council minutes that reflect discussion and input and that the CTE Advisory Council is used to assist the district in planning and evaluating vocational education programs; working relationships with local industry to help inform current needs and guide the incorporation of new skill sets and requirements into the curriculum; and understanding of job skills that are relevant to local businesses through the relationship between industry and CTE teachers. Consider using the Advisory Groups: Advisory Councils and Committees Handbook located at the Iowa Department of Education's Web site, http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=265&Itemid=1428#TechAssistance, to identify characteristics of successful CTE advisory councils. Additionally, representation for each of the program areas was inconsistent in the last CTE Advisory Committee meeting. Consider opportunities to continue to recruit and identify business and industry members to participate in the district's CTE Advisory Committee. Best practice is to include at least two community members for each program area.

Professional Development

In an improving district/school, staff is qualified for assignments and engages in ongoing learning opportunities to improve effectiveness. Student achievement and other sources of data are used to set goals for professional development. The district provides professional learning opportunities that include theory, demonstration, practice, and coaching. Evidence includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Professional development focus is determined through the analysis of student achievement and performance data.
- Professional development is focused and based on research-based strategies.
- Professional development sessions build on one another, are distributed throughout the school year, and are sustained over time.
- Time is provided for teachers to collaborate and apply new content and pedagogical knowledge.
- An established system provides support to monitor and evaluate implementation of professional development and its impact on student learning.
- Formative student data and teacher implementation data are used to adjust professional development and guide instructional decisions.
- All school staff members, instructional and non-instructional, are provided professional development to support job roles and functions.
- Professional development activities contribute to the capacity of all school staff to develop cultural competence and to reflect and respect diversity in classroom and work environments.

Noted Strengths:

39. School board members and administrators reported the effective use of professional development time planned regularly throughout the school year. The schedule of professional development provides appropriate time and opportunity for teachers to learn, implement, and strengthen skills.
40. Administrators and teachers reported using the program evaluation tool from the Iowa Professional Development Model (IPDM). Evaluation results were studied by the district's Professional Development Committee to determine needs. Data indicated teachers needed more time for collaboration. In response, administrators built collaboration time into the professional development schedule. In addition, the master calendar was re-designed to include collaboration time within the contract day.
41. This school year teachers each received a laptop computer and have been learning new ways to integrate technology into instruction to enhance student learning. The district is commended for designing professional development focused on instructional technology for all PK-12 teachers. Examples of skills being learned included Wiki, blogs, Smartboard, and Skype. All teachers have a laptop and are currently being trained to support one-to-one laptops for all secondary students in the near future.

42. CTE teachers reported the district is supportive of their professional development. CTE teachers participated in both district professional development (implementing technology and writing lessons using the four quadrants) and CTE professional development (Eastern regional meeting for Family Consumer Sciences, annual Perkins consortium meetings, and Iowa Department of Education sponsored meetings).
43. Instructional support staff reported multiple avenues for professional development. Examples included the following:
- Monthly meetings with the principal
 - Meetings with AEA staff
 - Participation in district-wide professional development
 - Paraeducator training
 - Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) and medication distribution
 - Participation in IEP meetings
44. Learning support staff provided a number of examples demonstrating professional development was helpful in advancing their instructional practice:
- Iowa Talented and Gifted (ITAG) Conference
 - AEA courses
 - Reading Recovery conference
 - District-wide professional development (e.g., book studies, differentiation, and technology)

The results of professional development included national and international networking and sharing cross-curricular learning within the district.

Recommendations for Improvement:

45. The district has made significant progress in the selection of professional development focus and implementation since the district's last accreditation site visit May 2005. Currently, the district is engaged in several research-based professional development opportunities; however, some staff members were not clear about how all initiatives align to enhance student learning. The district is encouraged to develop and communicate a clear vision for how all professional development initiatives align to support student achievement. Consider the following suggestions:
- Clarify and communicate the purpose for each professional development initiative.
 - Develop a long range (i.e., five-year) professional development plan that clearly articulates initiatives and coordinates efforts to provide a systemic approach to professional development.
 - Develop common vocabulary, processes, and expectations to ensure staff implement with fidelity.
 - Contact the district's Partnership Director from Heartland AEA to coordinate assistance with the following:

- **Professional Learning Communities:** Access Richard and Rebecca DuFour materials such as *Professional Learning Communities That Work*, available at Heartland AEA. Study, then make decisions and plan structures for collaboration with a focus on student work. This will guide the use of the collaboration log and provide effective structure for collaboration time.
 - **Special Education Co-Teaching:** Consider specialized training on co-teaching for special and general education teachers who are involved in the collaborative model. This training is specific to meeting needs contained in IEPs within the general education setting. Marilyn Friend materials are suggested and available through Heartland AEA.
 - **Differentiated Instruction:** Consider accessing materials at Heartland AEA to support continued training in Differentiated Instruction. Some sources of support might be works by Carol Ann Tomlinson, Rick Wormeli, and Betty Hollas.
 - **Collaboration:** Multiple groups used the word “collaboration” with several different purposes. Clarify the definition as it applies to each professional development initiative. For example, clarify the difference among professional development collaboration, collaboration for co-teaching, and collaboration which occurs during common planning time. The efficacy of the collaboration process might be improved by incorporating greater structure formality and intentionality.
46. Non-instructional support staff (i.e., food service workers, secretaries, bus drivers, and custodians) were aware of the district’s anti-bullying and harassment policy but have received limited training in procedures for reporting or dealing with bullying or harassment. Non-instructional support staff is often in locations where such incidents might occur (e.g., lunch lines, bus, and playground) and in situations where they might be the only adult supervising students or the only adult to witness an incident. Consider the importance of all school staff having training to be knowledgeable of procedures to follow when incidents occur.
47. Parents and paraeducators indicated the roles of paraeducators and supervising teachers are not always clearly defined and distinct. For example, paraeducators are asked to teach lessons to students or provide small group instruction. Planned, formal collaboration time between paraeducators and teachers is not available. Paraeducators provide valuable contributions to instructional support of students; however, their role must be one of support rather than one of equal or near equal responsibility with licensed staff. The district is encouraged to explore ways to more clearly define and distinguish the roles of paraeducators in classrooms. Multiple resources are available at the Iowa Department of Education Web site: http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=773&Itemid=1297.
48. Special education teachers would benefit from formal collaborative/consultative and co-teaching training in order to fully implement the collaborative/consultative model with fidelity. Training could include specially designed instruction and collaboration techniques and strategies to facilitate implementation of the consultative teaching model (e.g., effective use of collaboration time between general and special education teachers, considerations when implementing a “reverse consultation

model"). Consider contacting the district's Partnership Director from Heartland AEA to coordinate assistance.

Monitoring and Accountability

In an improving district/school, the district/school establishes a comprehensive system that monitors and documents performance of student progress, curriculum, instruction, programs, and initiatives. Results from assessments drive the goal setting and decision-making processes. Leadership supports a system that regularly analyzes student performance and program effectiveness. Instructional decision-making utilizes a process of collecting, analyzing, and summarizing data. Evidence includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- A system for district-wide student assessments, including multiple measures that are valid and reliable, is implemented.
- Decision-making for the continuous improvement of instruction and student learning using student achievement and teacher implementation data is employed.
- The district's/school's cycle of program evaluation as noted in its CSIP is implemented.
- Summative evaluation processes are used to determine whether professional development has resulted in improved student learning.

Noted Strengths:

49. District administrators reported using Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) and Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED) data to determine the need for professional development to close the gap in academic achievement among subgroups and the general education population. Differentiated Instruction and Instructional Decision Making (IDM) were selected as models for professional development to improve achievement for all students.
50. Although individual student areas of noncompliance were identified during the district's special education program procedural compliance review completed last fall, evidence has been submitted as of January 29, 2010 that these corrections have been made. The Iowa Department of Education has also received a copy of the AEA letter stating that the district level corrective action plan (CAP) has been fully implemented within the required timelines and all requirements have been met.
51. The district reported the use of strategies that ensure poor and minority students are not taught at a higher rate than other students by inexperienced, unqualified, or out-of-field teachers. For example, administrators examine course enrollment data; however, there are not enough students to identify a trend and can verify students are not being excluded. Often, there is only one section of a course which limits choices and scheduling specific required classes takes precedence.
52. CTE teachers reported using data to make program and curricular improvements. Examples included the Health Occupations teacher using enrollment data to modify the Health Occupations sequence. The Health Occupations teacher added First Aid classes to the program to encourage males to enroll in Health Occupations program.

The Health Occupations teacher also focuses on a variety of health careers such as sports trainers and morticians. CTE teachers also reported using CTE performance indicators. CTE teachers reported collaborating about strategies to improve completers in CTE programs.

Recommendations for Improvement:

53. **Martensdale-St. Marys CSD Annual Progress Report (APR*) Data
Using Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS)
and Iowa Tests of Educational Development (ITED)
*Includes all students, Grades 3-8 and 11 collapsed data**

Content Area	Subgroup	2006-2007 Percent Proficient	2007-2008 Percent Proficient	2008-2009 Percent Proficient
Math State	All Students	76.12	76.39	76.94
Math District		81.71	75.72	78.60
Math State	Low SES	61.10	61.95	63.17
Math District		63.79	59.18	66.67
Math State	IEP	36.39	38.32	39.49
Math District		51.52	33.33	56.41
Math State	White	79.20	79.62	80.33
Math District		82.18	75.94	77.98
Reading State	All Students	72.98	73.02	74.93
Reading District		74.93	73.91	73.69
Reading State	Low SES	57.52	57.96	60.79
Reading District		58.62	57.14	59.65
Reading State	IEP	29.58	31.28	33.43
Reading District		24.24	25.93	35.90
Reading State	White	75.95	76.17	78.28
Reading District		74.92	74.06	73.65

District data regarding reading and mathematics seems to generally align with State averages when considering all students in grades 3-8 and 11 as collapsed data. The overall result is student performance hovering near state averages with limited consistent upward trends in achievement. The district is encouraged to continue studying Differentiated Instruction and incorporate further investigation of alignment of the district's intended curriculum with its enacted curriculum. As the district continues its study and practice of Differentiated Instruction, ensure it is adequately anchored in reading and math content, as district student achievement data would indicate, particularly as it is incorporated into all content areas at each level. A topic of professional inquiry might be, "How is the study and implementation of Differentiated Instruction in all content areas effecting the achievement of all learners?"

54. Limited evidence was found of program evaluation demonstrating the impact of programs and initiatives on student learning and student success. Administrators and instructional staff are encouraged to establish procedures and practices to develop and use program evaluation, particularly in professional development, curriculum development, and other school programs (e.g., Gifted and Talented, CTE, At-Risk, School Counseling, special education) or initiatives (e.g., IDM, Differentiated Instruction, collaborative teaching, Advisor/Advisee, BATs, and Character Counts). For each program or initiative, consider setting clear program goals that answer the question, "What do we want as a result of the program, initiative, or support service?" Identify clear, aligned measurable goals. Establish a process and procedure to follow in monitoring progress (formative) and evaluating program impact (summative). Based on results, determine which program elements to sustain, which program elements need modification to become more effective, and which program elements to abandon or replace. Contact the district's Partnership Director from Heartland AEA to coordinate assistance in program evaluation.
55. While in most instances the district does not have enough students in certain subgroups to report annual student progress data (i.e., students with Individualized Education Plans), it is permissible for the district to study the data internally with teachers. The district is encouraged to study subgroup data (i.e., gender and others), including achievement data for the district's Gifted and Talented students and At-Risk students, to learn more about student performance and identify professional development needs. The district is encouraged to study patterns and trends in data. Consider contacting the district's Partnership Director from Heartland AEA to coordinate assistance with data analysis.
56. BEDS HQT data indicate the district's special education teachers use the collaborative/consultative teaching model to provide instructional and support services to special education students. Special education teachers are licensed to use the consultative teaching model; however, special education and general education teachers could benefit from further formal training in the areas of co-teaching and the collaborative/consultative teaching model. Contact the district's Partnership Director for Heartland AEA to arrange on-site training or for information on professional development opportunities at other locations.

Martensdale-St. Marys Community School District's Compliance Status in Applicable Federal Programs:

Title IIA (Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund)

The district has no citations of Title IIA non-compliance identified during this visit.

Title IID (Enhancing Education through Technology, E2T2)

The district has no citations of Title IID non-compliance identified during this visit.

Title III (English Language Learners)

The district has no citations of Title III non-compliance identified during this visit.

Title IVA (Safe and Drug Free Schools)

The district has no citations of Title IVA (SDFSC) non-compliance identified during this visit.

Title V (Innovative Programs)

The school district has no citations of Title V non-compliance identified during this visit.

Title XC (Education of Homeless Children and Youth)

The district has no citations of Title XC non-compliance identified during this visit.

Areas of Non-Compliance

The Martensdale-St. Marys CSD shall submit a plan of correction for each non-compliance item listed below to the Site Visit Team Leader within 45 business days of the receipt of this report. Evidence of corrective action for non-compliance(s) may be submitted with the plan or at a later date in accordance with the noted timeline. The district may choose to use the following matrix as a format for the development of an action plan or develop its own.

Chapter 12 Non-compliance Issues	Additional Details	Plan of Correction	Timeline for Completion
1. HSPH2 The health program for grades 9-12 does not contain one unit. 281 – IAC 12.5(5)(e)	Please submit the high school master schedule for the 2010-2011 school year noting the inclusion of one full unit of health. Also, please provide the course registration handbook and enrollment data.		September 10, 2010
2. EQ5 No evidence exists to indicate the school district provides equal opportunity to participate in programs by gender, sexual orientation, gender identify, marital status, socioeconomic status, disability, race, national origin, color, religion, and creed. 281 – IAC 12.1(1)	<p>The equal opportunity in the educational program aspect of policy #102 omits reference to gender, socioeconomic status, disability, or creed.</p> <p>Please submit the revised policy and the board meeting minutes noting approval of the revision of policy #102.</p>		June 1, 2010
3. LP4 No evidence exists	Evidence of several aspects of a K-12 school library program were provided		September 10, 2010

Chapter 12 Non-compliance Issues	Additional Details	Plan of Correction	Timeline for Completion
<p>that the school library program is regularly reviewed, revised, and designed to provide methods to improve library collections. 281 – IAC 12.3(12)(b)(1)</p>	<p>(i.e., connections with parents and community, information literacy curriculum, and information literacy lesson plan).</p> <p>Please submit a comprehensive, K-12 school library program plan incorporating all the required elements of a school library program. Resources may be accessed on the Iowa Department of Education Web site: http://www.iowa.gov/educate/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=959&Itemid=1503</p> <p>Please contact Mary Cameron, School Library Program Consultant, Iowa Department of Education, mary.cameron@iowa.gov, for assistance.</p>		
<p>4. SR3 Permanent student records are not kept in a fire-resistant safe/vault or electronically with a secure back-up file. 281 – IAC 12.3(4)</p>	<p>Please submit a written assurance from the superintendent that all permanent student records are stored in a fire-resistant safe/vault or electronically with a secure back-up file.</p>		<p>September 10, 2010</p>

Areas of Non-Compliance Outside of Chapter 12

Outside of Chapter 12 Non-compliance Issues	Additional Details	Plan of Correction	Timeline for Completion
<p>1. EQD1 The district's policies regarding non-discrimination in employment omit reference to several protected categories. Title IX 34CFR 106.9 Section 504.34 CFR 104.8, Iowa Code 216.6</p>	<p>Policy #102 omits reference to age and creed.</p> <p>Policies #302.1 and 303.2 omit reference to creed.</p> <p>Please submit the revised policies and a copy of the board meeting minutes noting approval.</p>		<p>June 1, 2010</p>
<p>2. Notification of Non-discrimination Statement</p> <p>EQD2 The district's non-discrimination notification statement in newspaper or newsletter sent to all community folks was not stated correctly. Section 504 34 CFR 104.8, Title IX 34 CFR</p>	<p>The district's most recent communication of its non-discrimination statement in local newspaper/newsletter was incorrectly stated. The policy has been corrected. Communication of the corrected non-discrimination statement has not been disseminated.</p> <p>The district's most recent</p>		<p>August 20, 2010</p>

Outside of Chapter 12 Non-compliance Issues	Additional Details	Plan of Correction	Timeline for Completion
<p>106.9; OCR Guidelines IV.O and V.C.</p> <p>EQD3 The district's non-discrimination notification statement in district major publications was not stated correctly. Section 504 34 CFR 104.8, Title IX 34 CFR 106.9; OCR Guidelines IV.O and V.C.</p>	<p>communication of its non-discrimination statement has been corrected but not yet published in district major publications (e.g., parent, student, and employee handbooks; registration handbook; coaches' handbooks; brochures about the district; Web site; and school newsletters.</p>		<p>August 20, 2010</p>