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Leveraging the International Baccalaureate MYP to Restructure Underperforming Schools

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11:15AM-12:30PM
Chicago 10

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Traditional Approaches to school turnaround

In many districts the approach to school turnaround consists of one or several of the following:

- Leadership change
- Certificated staff change
- Infusion of funds for resources
- Additional staff
- Revised professional learning
- Facilities

Few approaches to school reform go deep into every one of these elements to really change the complete fabric of the school.



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Our approach to school turnaround

- We believe that the most effective approach to school turnaround is to approach it as if each school entity is a living breathing human being. We approach it learning about the personality and past of the school while also developing a realistic assessment of the overall health of the school.
- We begin by assessing the mind, body and spirit of the school. Before any changes are made there is a phase of collecting and aggregating information to develop a comprehensive picture of the current reality. Only once there is an accurate picture of the current reality is developed can there be an accurate image developed of the desired future of the school.



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Creating Context around our lift

- Every school has a culture, a reputation and a character that is known within its community.
- Cooper Middle School- persistently underperforming for 35 years
 - Known for frequent fights
 - Facilities in poor condition
 - Adequate funds but lack of appropriate allocation
 - Fatigued teaching staff
 - Rampant gang activity surrounding the school community
 - Highest number of students requesting transfers to other boundary areas in the district
- We made the decision to change our school to being known as Cooper Academy to help break the negative community perception of Cooper Middle School.



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Bold move to put kids first

- Decision to redraw boundaries and to open the school in August of 2012 as a neighborhood school of choice for IB.
- Opened in August 2012 with 425 students in grades 6 & 7.
- 95% of students attending the school lived at or below the poverty line
- Decision to try and make a program change from the other middle school that had the IB program on their campus



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Surprise candidacy

- The previous school where the MYP was residing performed so poorly during their visit that the program change was not granted and our school, we were notified in early August 2012 and had to make a swift decision to apply for candidacy since we were only two weeks away from opening the school.
- We wrote and submitted the application for candidacy in three weeks and were granted candidacy status. Due to the nature of the situation we entered as a second year candidate school and had a scheduled consultant visit in March of 2013 and an authorization visit planned for Spring 2014. This gave us 22 months to move a brand new school from early implementation to full implementation of the MYP.



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Our Approach

- We determined that we would embrace change and as a staff adopted a mentality of “nothing is sacred.”
- We made commitments to the following:
 - Open door policy
 - Complete honesty and transparency from all levels of our organization
 - We would use data to drive our decisions but would anchor our work in building relationships and a tangible culture of connectedness for every student and adult on campus
 - We would never do things just because that’s the way it’s always been done
 - We would implement a rigorous program for all students regardless of their educational background... we committed to continuously teach at grade level and beyond every day



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Leadership Moves

Leaning in to the discomfort of change

- As an administrative team we were faced with creating new every day, every step was new territory and we had to make a daily and situational decision on how to lead, it was a daily internal negotiation regarding approaching the change.
- When facing a situation where everything is new you have two options of approaching the change:
 - Collaborative vs. command leadership
 - The decision point is in determining the level of urgency and the impact of taking control versus releasing control with each element.
 - Before this can become fluid a leader has to understand/have a full grasp of the current reality of their school.



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Evaluating the Mind, Body and Spirit of the school

- Before any lasting structural changes can take route, before any change will take root it is essential as a leader to quickly and effectively assess the overall mind, body and spirit of the school.
- This is not determined in one conversation with one person but is a gathering of observational data and anecdotal information to craft a realistic version of the current culture and climate of the school.



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Evaluating the Mind of the school

- Evaluating the mind of the school is grounded in determining the mindset of the adults on campus and their perspective of student learning/growth potential. To evaluate the mindset of the school you are working to determine whether the adults on campus embody a fixed or a growth mindset.
- Fixed mindset messages one may hear:
 - These students are doing the best they can given the circumstances they come from
 - These students are troublemakers
 - That student has a bad attitude
 - Those students are bad news
 - These kids can't read on grade level

Listen for the messages of “these, those and that” this indicates whether the staff and leadership embrace a fixed mindset grounded in a poverty of expectations regarding student performance



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Evaluating the Mind of the school

- Growth mindset messages one may hear:
 - Our students are...
 - We can
 - Let's try
 - I believe (followed by a positive...)

A growth mindset message is not praising students. The position of a mindset focused on growth and development reveals the individuals belief that growth and learning can happen for all individuals, it's a belief that intelligence isn't fixed but is developed.



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Evaluating the Body of the school

- Determining the Physical health of the school... what are the tangible look fors that help you determine the physical health of the school as a whole?
- Assessing the physical health of the school goes beyond facilities, you are looking at structures, patterns of movement, schedule, cleanliness, physical appearance of classrooms
- Determine the material and facilities based resources available to assist in the restructuring process

1 of 2 Cooper Schoolwide Facilities Needs 7/19/2015

Location	Description of Issue	Necessary Action



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Evaluating the Spirit of the school

- Assessing the culture and climate provides you with information regarding the spirit of the school, the vibe
- Engage others within the school community/district to help you assess the spirit of the school
- We propose that the spirit of the school is the most essential component of the school turnaround
- Toxic versus Engaging? Look for different verbiage



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Evaluating the Spirit of the school

- List out the toxic elements of school spirit...what types of things may one see
- List out the Engaging (or other word) regarding school spirit
- List out research on the importance of school culture to the social and emotional well being of students
- What data streams are available for individuals to tap into to provide concrete evidence of growth/improvement in the spirit of the school



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Moving Current Reality to Desired Future

- Ground the work in the IB Standards and Practices- Comprehensive approach to school reform when approached from a current reality/desired future viewpoint with transparency and honesty.
- First thing we did once evaluating the Mind, Body and Spirit of the school was to look through the lens of the Standards and Practices
- We took a blank copy of the consultant report template/evaluation visit template and utilized this to determine the extent to which the school is effectively implementing the Standards and Practices.

Practices	The consultant checks that:	Analysis of school situation		
3 The school community demonstrates an understanding of, and commitment to, the program(s). Evidence in the school application: Consideration phase Q1, 2, 3 Question A.2, A.3 School website	The school applies the IB copyright policy to prepare communications for its school community			✗
	Actions are taken to promote the understanding and support of the implementation of the MYP by the school community.			✗

Criteria \ Analysis			
Planning	No planning shown as yet.	Some planning shown. Clarification on requirement necessary.	Planning is in progress. Clear timelines and goals have been identified.
Evidence	No evidence provided as yet.	Not enough evidence is provided or evidence provided needs further clarification.	Evidence is provided. The school clearly understands what further evidence will be necessary at the time of authorization.
Support	Immediate attention and support required.	Support is required.	Well understood by the school. Reminder needs to be given.



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Engaging Staff in the Process

To determine the extent to which the school is implementing each element of the Standards and Practices we dedicated a significant amount of time to deconstructing each of the sets of standards.

Anchoring our work in the Standards and Practices for the MYP we worked over the course of three months to deconstruct each component and merged them into an Excel document that allowed us to self-evaluate on a rubric the current implementation of the school in regards to:

- Philosophy
- Organization
- Curriculum



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Leveraging the IB Standards and Practices

Every step that we have taken to establish our organization and successfully engage in a school turnaround has been anchored in the operationalizing of the IB Standards and Practices.

Following a thorough staff review of each component of the Standards and Practices we dug deep into each substandard/element and created agreements/expectations/structures to ensure that the IB Standards and Practices were the anchor and foundation of our work which provided us the opportunity to truly make IB the fabric of all of our work.



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Philosophy

- We believe that intentionally addressing the philosophy creates clarity and infrastructure to the work of school turnaround.
 - The philosophy directly relates to the “mind” of the school. Following the analysis of the mindset of the school, begin to address the philosophy in a diagnostic manner.
 - Identify the elements of the “mind” of the school that aren’t functioning at a healthy level and then utilizing the substandards of the Philosophy standard, work collaboratively to create protocols, processes, structures and common agreements to ensure a shift in the mindset of the school.
- Mission
 - Vision
 - Commitment
 - Communication
 - Leadership
 - Access



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Philosophy- The power of clarity in purpose

Mission

- Outlines what the organization stands for as a whole
- Creates context for the work

Vision

- Serves as the desired future when the mission is acted on
- Language is accessible and precise
- Focuses on students first
- Is actionable

It is essential that the mission and vision be collaboratively developed.

To have a true mission to drive the work of the organization there must be buy in/ownership over the organizational priorities.



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Philosophy-Commitment

Commitment-

- The state or quality of being dedicated to a cause, activity, etc.
- Creating clarity as a team of adults around the characteristics that demonstrate dedication and commitment within the organization
- Developing staff norms/ common agreements around commitment and dedication
- When tackling the idea of commitment we focus on working with our staff to acknowledge the discomfort of change and the natural desire to lean out of conversations regarding change.
- We develop and annually revise common agreements regarding how we define and operationalize commitment and dedication, and we develop internal accountability structures to address lack of commitment.



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Philosophy- Communication

- Communication is THE make it or break it variable of school turnaround
- As a leadership team it is essential to develop norms around communication in the areas of:
 - Email templates and policies
 - When to email versus phone or face to face
 - Agree to disagree behind closed doors, united front outside of the cabinet
- As a certificated staff it is important to help staff set healthy boundaries regarding internal and external communication:
 - cc'ing administration on emails/getting help with proofing emails to parents in the early stages
 - Submission of course syllabi and course outlines
 - Email communication reply guidelines (timeframe for replying)
 - 1, 2, 3 then me rule



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Philosophy- Leadership

- The Leadership team must have a common philosophy of the style of leadership that they will operate under...
 - Pulling the site administrative team together and analyzing leadership strengths and taking a leadership styles assessment (recommend Strengthsfinder 2.0 by Tom Rath)
 - Identify common strengths and gaps related to leadership styles
- Role play leadership scenarios and work through resolution to help with grounding
- Commit to calibration the first month of the turnaround...anything that is related to personnel, parents and discipline, the rule of two minds comes into practice



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Organization

“The achievements of an organization are the results of the combined effort of each individual.”

Vince Lombardi

- Structures
- Leadership
- Policies
- Procedures
- Capacity Building
- Community Engagement
- Resources
- Counseling
- Scheduling



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Organization- Structures, Leadership, Policies and Procedures in the midst of change

- When looking to the MYP Standards and Practices from a leadership perspective it speaks to developing a pedagogical leadership team...moving beyond one person as the keeper of knowledge.
- Looking at the structures, policies and procedures of the school to determine if they are providing the opportunity for building capacity.
- The language of the standards speaks to “the school” establishing policies and procedures. In approach school turnaround and leveraging the MYP it is essential to look at who within the school community is contributing to the development of the policies, procedures and structures. Those who are involved and heard will have buy in.



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Organization- Capacity Building

- When approaching school turnaround, leaders within the school should begin looking to build capacity in their team from day one.
 - Identify individuals that are innovators and early adopters to the initiatives and begin providing them opportunities to lead in a safe environment and then provide increasing opportunities to develop their leadership skill set.
 - Assemble a pedagogical leadership team that taps into the skills and strengths of multiple team members. Begin utilizing the collective expertise of this team to broaden the base of leadership and take a more active role in leading their peers.
 - A successful school turnaround is one that can be replicated. We replicate by building up the team and building up the skills of those on the bench so that when one person moves on, there are two in their place waiting and ready to continue moving forward.



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Organization- Community Engagement & Resources

- Community engagement dramatically shifts the course of school turnaround and the community perception of the school.
- Intentionally engaging parents and community members/business members in the school community broadens students worldviews and helps them embrace a global perspective of education
- We looked at physical and curricular opportunities that lent themselves to incorporating opportunities for community engagement.
- Bringing community members and parents on campus to engage with students shifted their perception of the school, the educational program and became the best promotional tool.
- Utilizing social media to promote and engage with the community provides ample opportunities to shift perception of the school while building relationships with those that anchor and sustain the change that occurs at the school.



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Organization- Counseling & Scheduling

- The organization of the school should be nested in the belief that every decision made at the school is implemented for the sole purpose of improving the lives and outcomes for students.
- This means that every person on campus takes and active role in academically, socially and emotionally supporting students.
- Scheduling within the IB MYP years 1-3 provides guidelines for subject matter requirements which provides access to students.
- We adopted a philosophy that every decision that we made in terms of curriculum, course sequencing and scheduling of students had to be able to map up to a clear articulation with the IB Diploma Programme. Our goal is to increase the success of students of poverty within the IB Diploma Programme to provide a variety of post-secondary options for all students.



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Curriculum

- Collaboration
- Reflection
- Curriculum Development
- Action
- Aligned Teaching
- Rigorous Assessment
- Communication regarding progress



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Curriculum- Our Approach

- Common agreements regarding how we would approach units. We use the IB MYP unit planner for every unit.
- We committed to common units across each subject with common assessments and learning progressions.
- Teacher customize delivery of instruction to play to their strengths but the concepts, content and literature are aligned across courses
- All units are collaboratively developed
- Development of curriculum is anchored in a “grade level and beyond” belief...if we can design it, then we believe that with the right support every student will achieve at that high level.
- We have a strong pedagogical leadership team that guides the work of their Accountable Communities and builds internal structures for norming the level of rigor and expectation of each unit.
- Schoolwide process for analyzing text complexity and approaching text.



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Curriculum- Collaboration

- The word collaboration is often misconstrued and there is a belief that any time teachers come together that they are collaborating.
- Continuum of collaboration-promoting an environment where teams constantly assess and reflect on their own collaborative efforts viewing their growth and progress on a continuum of collaboration.
- Shifting adult relationships to be completely focused on continued improvement, reciprocal accountability and outside of the box thinking is grounded in a commitment to lean in to the discomfort of change and to challenge each other to go further for the students we serve.
- Collaboration is a culture not a weekly meeting that occurs, it starts at the leadership level.



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Curriculum- Reflection

- Reflection is incorporated in every aspect of learning.
- We have found that reflection is a process not an action. We incorporate reflection walls in every classroom and provide ample opportunities for reflection.
- Classroom walls are interactive and demonstrate the progress and process of learning.
- We have coined a phrase “Post-its are our Pixie dust, we sprinkle them around to show the magic” we use sticky notes of all different sizes and colors to make learning interactive and colorful. We keep reflections up through out the year to serve as a timeline of learning.



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Curriculum- Curriculum Development & Aligned Teaching

- Curriculum development within the IB takes time... spend money on getting key members of your team trained. Look for people that are early adopters, excited and can lead their peers.
- Focus your time and energy on working side by side with your teams and become intimately familiar with their unit plans and the process of development. Provide feedback but collaborate, tap into your expertise and help to promote reflective questioning.
- Mapping out curriculum across the campus is absolutely essential to the overall health of the school...eliminating cross over and overlapping concepts taught....
- Vertical and horizontal alignment of the curriculum is absolutely essential.



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Curriculum- Action

- The focus of action within the MYP at a turnaround school is especially important.
- We focus our work on creating intrinsic motivation for students to engage in action. Action is embedded in every unit and is wide ranging in terms of what it asks students to do.
- Incorporating action into the unit plan provides a structured way for students to intrinsically cultivate the IB Learner Profile attributes and develop into caring, compassionate, self-aware and driven individuals who are able to see the needs of others and society in a real way.



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Curriculum- Assessment

- Our teachers develop common assessments in each subject area and we utilize the IB MYP criteria and rubrics for every assessment.
- Reflection is embedded at the completion of every assessment to help students engage in metacognition regarding their performance.
- Variety of types of assessment are incorporated:
 - Formative and summative assessment
 - Performance task, culminating task, projects and presentations



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Cycles of Review as a school wide approach to reflection

Successful school turnaround begins with adopting a philosophy and belief in continuous improvement and refinement of practice.

- Identification of priority data indicators that indicate growth/decline at the beginning of the school year
- Determine the means for collecting the data
- Establish key times within the year to corporately review the progress toward these indicators including opportunities for conversation and reflection
- We recommend utilizing a structure like the PDSA Cycle from the work of W. Edwards Deming to guide decision making, reflection and refinement of practice.
- The Cycle of Review process must be grounded in data indicators identified as important by the staff as a whole to ensure it facilitates deep reflection and refinement of practice.



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Changing culture- shifting the spirit of the school

- The IB Learner Profile attributes are a powerful tool for implementing change amongst adults and students on a campus that has a culture/climate challenge.
- Working as a staff to plan out with intentionality regarding how the IB Learner Profile will become an actionable and vibrant part of the fabric of the school.
- The Cooper Academy Way
 - Engraining the IB Learner Profile into all aspects of school life
 - Transitioning the school disciplinary system to focus on the daily living out of the IB Learner Profile
 - Implementation of Restorative disciplinary practices to foster and development attributes in students.



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Changing culture and climate

- The culture of many “turnaround” schools in terms of student conduct has been entrenched in a consequence based disciplinary policy.
- We embraced a schoolwide belief that we are teachers and not correctional officers. We believe that even in the midst of poor decision making we can teach appropriate behavior.
- We embrace failure and create a classroom culture that looks for “the best wrong answer” and use these as the building blocks to increase transparency and vulnerability amongst students.
- We encourage healthy conflict and help to teach students how to engage in healthy conflict and disagree respectfully. This is anchored in the communication standards in each subject area.



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Changing culture and climate

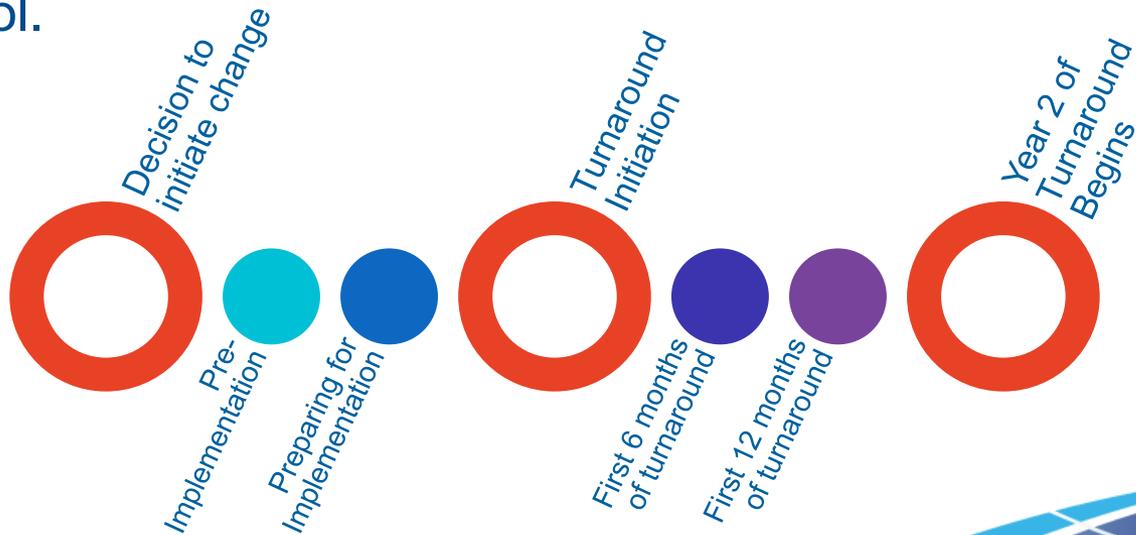
- Make inquiry exciting- each staff meeting we bring forward ideas that have promoted excitement in the classroom.
- Accountable Communities have developed team Pinterest boards, have shared Schoology accounts where they post resources to share and network with each other on Google.
- Classroom norms regarding the physical environment of the classroom. We believe that the classroom must feel inviting.
- Collaboratively developed and refined expectations regarding non-negotiables for every classroom.
- Throwing Fish every staff meeting-



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How do you get started within your organization?

- Determining your school's position in the school turnaround timeline to determine where to begin the process.
- If your school has started a turnaround process it isn't too late to begin the process of assessing and addressing the needs of the school.





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Resources:

We grounded our school turnaround process in research, pedagogy and practice.

Please feel free to take a list of the professional resources we utilized in our work. Copies are limited and available as you exit.

You may also view this full presentation and a copy of the resources at the following website:
www.shipmaneducation.com

To contact Kristine with more questions use the following:

E-mail: kristine@shipmaneducation.com

or complete the contact form on our website:
www.shipmaneducation.com