



Strategic Planning Process Historical Perspective

System-wide strategic planning began in the Onslow County School System in the mid-1980's with the district office and all schools, grades K-12, receiving accreditation through the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). SACS accreditation continues to be an integral part of the strategic planning process within the Onslow County School System.

The most significant change in North Carolina's accreditation process came in 1983 with the enactment of the Basic Education Plan (BEP). This program introduced the opportunity and performance standards that addressed the availability of educational resources within each district. This plan guaranteed each child had access to the same educational program. The BEP Course of Study and class size ratios were the opportunity standards created.

In 1990, North Carolina legislated the school improvement process known as Senate Bill II (SBII). Under this process, each school developed a plan, complete with individual school goals and strategies for accomplishing each goal.

The North Carolina Performance Based Accountability Plan (PBAP), as established by the State Board under the directives of SBII required each local administrative unit to develop a 3-5 year plan to improve student performance. It included 30 performance indicators that schools and school systems had to meet. State testing was an important component of PBAP. This school improvement process lasted for three years and included the development, by each school, of a school improvement plan, which focused on the state-mandated performance indicators.

PBAP was followed at the state level by the ABC model for school improvement (1996). This model had a three-pronged focus—A: Accountability; B: Back to Basics; C: Local Control. The ABC model continues to be the school improvement model for all schools in North Carolina.

With the state changing the model for school improvement every few years, educators in Onslow County recognized the need for a consistent plan within the school system. In 1991, after much consideration, administrators adopted the improvement model based on "Effective Schools Research" as the foundation that schools and the school system, as a whole, would follow for the future. An effective school is defined as one "in which all students learn the specified curriculum, regardless of factors in their background which have ordinarily been identified as those which prevent such learning." There are seven correlates of effective schools—safe and orderly environment, climate of high expectations for success, instructional leadership, clear and focused mission, opportunity to learn and student time on task, frequent monitoring of student progress, and home-school relations. Using the correlates of "Effective Schools Research", the school system developed the original plan for school improvement, which the schools in the district would support with their individual plans.



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In 1996, the Onslow County School System was invited to participate in a North Carolina consortium of school systems aimed at providing the structure needed to become an “excellent” school system. The initiative involved the components of Total Quality Education (TQE), modeled after the Total Quality Management Model created by Edward Deming. The focus of TQE is on “how” a job is planned and completed. The focus of the system moved from a school improvement to a strategic planning model. North Carolina followed this same approach by implementing a NC Public Schools Strategic Plan.

The alignment of the principles and standards of SACS, TQE, and the North Carolina Public Schools Strategic Plan with the components of the Onslow County Schools plan assured that an umbrella planning approach was created to avoid fragmentation of reform initiatives.

A key element of the first and succeeding plans is the link between data and the identification of areas for needed improvement. Through the use of disaggregated student achievement and behavior data, along with climate survey data from internal and external stakeholders, the plans are designed to give clear direction to the schools. Specific guidelines were established to assist schools in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the school strategic plans. Components were added to earlier plans to standardize processes and procedures at the central level in order for all departments to utilize a more cohesive and integrated approach for addressing the goals of the school system and working toward attainment of the vision of “Excellence in Education.” While the Baldrige criteria were added in the 2001-2004 plan to serve as an evaluative construct for finding ways to restructure processes to build a more aligned management system for decision-making and goal setting, a greater emphasis has been placed upon this criteria through the adoption of the set of core values, which are the building blocks for the Baldrige criteria for the planning phase (2005-2010).

With the Superintendent and the Board of Education’s early commitment to continuous improvement through strategic planning, very few of the guidelines and structures outlined in the plan have had to be changed over the years. After a careful review of the plan by the Quality Council, the administrators, school strategic planning team representatives, and district office staff, it was determined that the intent of the vision, mission, and goals from the 2005-2010 plan were still relevant. There were minor revisions that were approved by the board of education in the spring of 2010.

In the fall 2006, the mission, goals and indicators of the NC Public Schools Strategic Plan were revised to reflect a focus on “future-ready students for the 21st century.” To better align with the state’s revised plan, Onslow County Schools adopted a similar “future-ready” mission and goals. Results are stated in measurable terms with key measures for data collection. A three-year addendum was written in 2007 to ensure that the school system retained its focus on the improvement of student achievement



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and learning opportunities for all students. The addendum was formulated to allow the system and schools to work together as a united team toward common goals, to chart progress along the way, and to measure successes for celebration and continuous improvement.

In 2005, Onslow County Schools became the first district in the North Carolina to earn district accreditation under the guidelines of AdvancED SACS/CASI. The PreK-12 initiative is aimed at the system's determination to provide a seamless education for its students and to demonstrate its vision for "Excellence in Education".

During the 2009-2010 school year the system was awarded its five-year district reaccreditation from AdvancED, SACS/CASI. The final exit report from this entity, specifically the Commendations and Required Actions, are to be addressed in the writing of the district and school-level strategic plans for the 2010-2016 planning cycle.