

Purpose of the Partnership

The purpose of the collaboration between the School District of the City of York (SDCY) and Mass Insight Education was to identify district strengths and opportunities for growth in order to update the 2013 Recovery Plan with high-impact action items that will increase student achievement.

District Diagnostic Process Overview

1. **Data collection:** Mass Insight Education collected data from a variety of sources to evaluate district systems and processes. Data collection included a review of performance data, existing reports and documents, feedback gathered from interviews and focus groups, and surveys collected from school and central office staff.
2. **Review and synthesis:** Mass Insight Education analyzed data by looking across ten major domains in order to identify organizational strengths and areas for growth and improvement. The domains include: Vision, Strategy, & Culture; Organizational Structure & Policy; School Management; Central Services; Finance; Human Resources; Academics; Operations; External Affairs; and Data & Accountability.
3. **Recommendations:** Mass Insight developed a manageable set of recommendations based on the findings of the diagnostic process. Recommendations are intended to be implemented over the next three years.

Findings: Mass Insight Education's 10 Domains

In the full report, findings are organized around Mass Insight Education's 10 domains. Major findings are highlighted below:

- There is a lack of morale among school and district staff and a limited understanding of the district's vision or strategy; however, there is a strong belief among core groups that students can succeed. (*Vision, Strategy, & Culture*)
- Current decision-making practices to make school improvements are not focused on the instructional core (the interaction between the student, the teacher, and the content). (*Vision, Strategy, & Culture*)
- The district lacks opportunities for professional development or cross-department sharing for Central Office staff or the School Board, and existing teacher professional development was described as inconsistent. (*Organizational Structure & Policy*)
- Technology, communication, and infrastructure were identified as consistent district challenges, though new financial, HR, and student information systems promise to improve efficiency. (*Central Services*)
- There is a strong interest in pursuing the distributed school leadership model. (*School Management*)
- Low teacher attendance impacts student learning; teacher attendance dropped from 91% in the 2014-2013 school year to 88% in the 2014-2015 school year-- 6 percentage points below the national average. A lack of substitutes results in split classroom that interfere with instruction. (*Human Resources*)
- The district does not have a consistent curriculum, scope and sequence, and academic materials in core subjects. (*Academics*)
- While there is a desire for collaboration both across schools and with the community, mechanisms to engage the community do not currently exist, and there are no formal systems or structures in place to allow for cross-school collaboration. (*External Affairs*)

Findings: 2013 Recovery Plan Progress

In the full report, individual goals of the 2013 Recovery Plan are compared to their 2015 outcomes. Major findings are highlighted below:

- The rate of students enrolling outside of district-run schools has not changed substantially since 2013.
- Schools have implemented site-based management and are now beginning to move to a distributed leadership model after a majority vote by York City teachers within each of the schools.
- None of the financial changes described in the 2013 Recovery Plan, including those around wage and benefits reductions, were implemented. An anticipated increase in state funding is the only improvement in the district's financial situation.
- The Cornerstone program, for students exhibiting behavioral difficulties in the mainstream classroom setting, completed its second year. While it still lacks some structures around entry and exit criteria, enrollment reached 87 students in the 2014-2015 school year. The district is also set to reach its goal of 12 Pre-K classrooms by the 2015-2016 school year.
- William Penn High School will implement a freshman academy for the 2015-2016 school year.
- As a result of summer 2015 contract negotiations, the school day will be extended by 40 minutes, which is 15 minutes more than the 2013 Recovery Plan recommended. The school year will be extended by 5 days and include additional professional development for teachers.

Recommendations

Mass Insight Education identified three focus areas for the district based on the diagnostic review:

1. *Support for Instruction*
2. *Communications*
3. *Talent*

These priority focus areas will only be successful through effective *resource alignment* and consistent *performance management*.

Within the first several weeks following the July 15, 2015 submission of this report, the Chief Recovery Officer will begin creating 90-day plans and an amendment to the 2013 Recovery Plan. Mass Insight recommends that the Chief Recovery Officer consider including the following actions in the plan:

- Communication:
 - Create and communicate a clear theory of action and strategy.
 - Ensure a system of consistent communication.
- Performance Management:
 - Establish a strategy management process.
 - Facilitate ongoing cross-school collaboration.
- Resource Alignment:
 - Align Central Office to support school instructional needs.
- Support for Instruction:
 - Continue to implement the freshman academy, distributed leadership, and curriculum adoption initiatives.
- Talent:
 - Stabilize school leadership.