



In Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, the Annual Operating Plan sets the direction for the Board's activities, including its Board Improvement Plan. The following information outlines our processes/thinkings in relation to the AOP, which has become synonymous with our BIPSA.

In spring 2010, a new approach to the HWDSB Annual Operating Plan (AOP) was introduced. This way of organizing the board's core work featured close ties with Strategic Directions, 2010-2013, such that each year's AOP was viewed as a stepping stone towards achievement of the broad goals contained in this overarching document. In fact, central elements of the Strategic Directions; Achievement Matters, Engagement Matters, Equity Matters, formed the foundation for the AOP, and thus the Board's Improvement Plan.

For each of these broad directions, several **essential components** are identified (e.g., create and implement an oral language and early reading strategy for students in kindergarten to grade two), and specific **strategies** are proposed for meeting goals in these areas (e.g., support kindergarten programming in light of full day strategy and focus on oral language/early reading).

In prior years, measurement of progress included consideration of demographic, perceptual, and outcomes data. While process data was acknowledged as important, it was not featured strongly in reporting. Now, indicators for success that consider both implementation goals and related outcomes are part of the plan. This focus on implementation flows from a heightened awareness of the importance of the stages and processes that are critical in ensuring the conditions for uptake of evidence-informed practices (Fixsen et al., 2005). That is, there is a growing literature that suggests that, in order to achieve desired student outcomes (i.e., enhanced student achievement and well-being), system, school and classroom strategies must be implemented according to research-based benchmarks. Further, this literature indicates that there are predictable stages of implementation, and that it takes several years to introduce a strategy and bring it to scale in a school district (National Implementation Research Network, 2009). By focusing attention on implementation in the AOP, more realistic and relevant success criteria were established. At the same time, it was acknowledged that this was a relatively new science within education. A series of measures were suggested for monitoring progress, but many of these were experimental in nature.

Understanding Implementation Stages*

- ① Exploration
- ② Installation
- ③ Initial Implementation
- ④ Partial Implementation
- ⑤ Full Implementation
- ⑥ Sustainability

**see Appendix A for the Implementation Rubric*

The work of the AOP is organized under three main areas of focus; Achievement Matters, Engagement Matters, and Equity Matters. Each area is comprised of several essential components and related strategies. Below, progress related to each essential component is articulated.

There is emerging evidence to suggest that high-performing districts have (1) a strong mission and vision that is understood and endorsed by system leaders and staff at all levels of the organization, (2) strategic planning and execution at a system level that sets the stage for enactment of consistent school/classroom and department level activity, that is supported and monitored by senior and system leaders (3) collaboration across the system for student improvement purposes, that is rooted in optimal use of data and evidence in a collaborative inquiry process (4) extensive job-embedded professional development that is responsive to the needs of learning teams and (5) a valuing of relationships (with students, parents, community, the ministry, etc.) and distributed leadership. The Annual Operating Plan emphasizes these features.

Strong Mission and Vision. Set within the HWDSB Strategic Directions, the core elements of the Annual Operating Plan; Achievement Matters, Engagement Matters, and Equity Matters, have become commonly understood cornerstones of the Annual Operating Plan. The AOP/BIPSA will therefore continue to be built upon these foundational elements. In addition, over the course of the past year, the system responded with enthusiasm to the concept of “knowing our students”. At its most inclusive level, this idea includes knowing each student in terms of their diverse background, their learning needs, their abilities, ways to engage them in learning, and their response to various instructional strategies. In the plan, this concept is extended to include the notions of “knowing our staff” and “knowing our parents/community” to reflect the deepening of understanding of how our work must integrate achievement, engagement and equity across our HWDSB community.

Strategic Planning and Executive across the Organization. Drawing on our growing appreciation of implementation science, the AOP 2010-2011 recognizes the importance of attending to the nuances of “getting from here to there”. Part of the work of ensuring that high-level plans gain traction in daily school and department life involves clear communication of expectations, clarity of roles, and assistance with the process of implementation and change. This will continue to be a significant area of focus for SOSAs, in collaboration with system leaders and consultants. In addition, research suggests that school districts are most successful when they select a small number of priority areas upon which the system will focus (Reeves, 2007). This assists with communication of expectations and with the likelihood of concentrated effective action across schools and departments. Reflecting upon the accomplishments that were driven by the previous plan, the needs of our students, and the recommendations of those who participated in the consultation process, Executive Council has selected a smaller number of priority areas for the coming year. That is not to say that certain areas that were identified in prior years are no longer important. In most cases work in these areas will be maintained at the same level. Rather, the system will put focused energy in a smaller number of areas that require a change in practice or deepening of efforts.

Another key element of successful strategic planning is the primacy of monitoring and evaluation. In 2010-2011, school superintendents enacted a new role, which facilitated close support and monitoring of school improvement plans. This form of relationship allowed for better linkage “on the ground” with the components of the AOP, and facilitated meaningful implementation of the plan. This form of support and monitoring will continue in 2012-13. In addition, E-BEST will continue to evaluate new programs and initiatives to ensure that these are effectively supporting student achievement and well-being. Finally, implementation pilots will continue through E-BEST’s Knowledge Mobilization Lab, to further illuminate key elements of the implementation process that should be replicated as other initiatives are introduced or scaled up.

The key priority areas for focused energy include:

- Assessment for, as, of learning as a foundational piece to knowing our students and responding appropriately to their needs
- preK-2 Tiered Literacy intervention (with exploration of tiered intervention models for 3-12, in response to struggling students in these grades that require support)
- Student engagement through opportunities for student voice, student leadership, program pathways, advancement of 21st century fluencies, the arts, sensitivity and support for student mental health and well-being
- Professional learning for schools and departments within a responsive system
- Leadership development
- Staff engagement through opportunities for staff voice, effective employee relations processes, implementation coaching and support, understanding and support for unique and responsive service delivery models, promoting service excellence
- Tiered approach to parent engagement, including a variety of opportunities for parent voice
- Continued development of the community engagement plan
- Use of the equity lens across all priority areas

Collaboration across the System. The significant infrastructure changes introduced in spring 2010 were designed to create a more collaborative and integrated system. While it will take time for these benefits to be fully realized, there are an increasing number of examples of collaborative approaches to school/department improvement (e.g., SOSA/consultant/PLT/school participating in school planning and actions; development and implementation of the district mental health strategy led across three departments). Work in this area will deepen as the professional learning plan includes capacity-building for consultants, schools, and departments in the area of collaborative inquiry. Critical to this work is the meaningful use of data and evidence. The Data Mobilization Strategy, developed in 2010-2011, is designed to coordinate the work of several departments in relation to: data infrastructure, integrity, privacy/information management, access, reporting, and school/department use. In 2012-13, this strategy will be focused on building capacity for data use in schools and departments, with a view to informing the collaborative inquiry process. In addition, to ensure the rigorous and current evidence is used to inform the selection of practices at the school/department/and system level, E-BEST will support capacity-building for system leaders with respect to evidence appraisal skills and will provide summaries of research to inform practice decisions.

Job-Embedded Professional Development. Research in continuous professional development and learning (Cordingley, 2008; Katz et al., 2008) has been used to inform the professional development models now used in HWDSB. The Professional Learning Plan highlights the importance of supporting schools and departments within the context of their daily work, providing responsive and differentiated coaching support in areas of need. So, while there is some learning that needs to be delivered more or less universally so that all staff have a standard of understanding and fluency (e.g., regulations, basic mental health literacy), other capacity, In addition to supporting the implementation of core priority areas in a school/department specific manner, this level of ownership and co-learning is designed to enhance academic optimism throughout the system.

Relationships and Leadership. The system will function best when students, staff, parents and community feel heard, valued, served, and celebrated. The AOP/BIPSA places high value on deeply knowing our students, staff, parents/guardians and community, and this commitment is centred on meaningful engagement and equity. This core value will be enacted via system level supports to help these groups with the challenges that have been identified via the consultation process and other means (e.g., assistance with role clarity, navigating the change process, tiered methods for parent engagement, support for student and staff mental health and well-being).

Also embedded within the AOP is a central focus on the development of leaders, informally through collegial coaching and facilitation, and through formal preparation processes for prospective system leaders. The Board Leadership Development Strategy Committee will oversee these processes, and will align their work with findings from the leadership survey, and with the directions indicated in the Professional Learning Plan.

Promoting Service Excellence. This year's AOP specifically addresses how HWDSB service departments will contribute to our strategic directions and support student achievement. Through professional learning opportunities, service leaders and their staff will engage in collaborative inquiry around service improvement planning. They will develop strategies to support knowing our students, knowing our staff and knowing our parents and communities. Their focus will be to provide excellent service to the system and build capacity within and across departments.

Measurement of the Annual Operating Plan

Monitoring of progress in key areas from Strategic Directions (e.g., all students in elementary prepared for secondary school, all students in secondary school prepared for their chosen pathway) will continue. For example, we will continue to monitor EQAO performance, graduation rates, participation in Specialist High Skills Major programming, completion of adult student programming. We will also explore ways to learn more about our students' destinations.

In addition, we will gather the opinions of key stakeholders in our priority areas. Student voice will continue to be captured using Tell Them From Me and the Safe and Equitable Schools Survey and further Director's Forums. We aim to enhance the involvement of students in survey recruitment, analysis, and reporting. New opportunities to gather parent voice data will be provided. A revised satisfaction survey will be developed to better understand parent views with respect to system-level engagement strategies, and school-level measures will be produced to assist with targeted engagement initiatives. The AOP consultation process facilitated extremely rich forums for gathering staff voice data. In addition, a leadership survey yielded helpful data that is informing our work in professional learning with system leaders. Some of these methodologies will be applied to the development of a process for hearing the HWDSB staff voice in the coming year.

Finally, implementation data will continue to be collected, via case studies and related measures, so that we can monitor strategic execution in priority areas.

APPENDIX A – Levels of Implementation

National Implementation Research Network Levels of Implementation

Level	Description
① Exploration	Needs assessment, mapping of resources and current practices, review of practices in other jurisdictions, literature review, assessment of organizational/school capacity... resulting in decisions about an evidence-informed course of action.
② Installation	Ensuring infrastructure (organizational processes, funding streams, human resources, technology), policy development, consultation... resulting in settings that are prepared for implementation.
③ Initial Implementation	Awareness-building, preparation for change, training, small scale piloting of strategies... resulting in introductory use of the evidence-informed strategy.
④ Partial Implementation	Introductory use of a strategy into school/district practices, staff are developing skills for implementing the strategy with fidelity. Different parts of the organization may be more advanced than other parts ... resulting in some use of evidence-informed strategy.
⑤ Full Implementation	Integration of strategy into school/district practices, alignment with policies and procedures, strategy carried out with proficiency, ongoing coaching to ensure implementation fidelity... resulting in the strategy becoming a regular part of school/district life.
⑥ Sustainability	Skillful adaptations to new circumstances, succession planning and training to ensure continuity, maintenance of supportive infrastructure... resulting in long-term survival and continued effectiveness of the evidence-informed strategy.