



SESSION 3 REPORT – SCHOOL PLAN GUIDE REVIEW

NAME OF SCHOOL: NIMITZ MIDDLE SCHOOL

DATE OF SESSION 3: 11/08/2012

NAME OF ORGANIZATION REPORTING: *Alliance for a Better Community*

NAME OF INDIVIDUAL REPORTING IN BEHALF OF THE ORGANIZATION: MARTHA CORTES

DATE THIS REPORT IS COMPLETED AND SUBMITTED: 11/09/2012

REVIEWING YOUR EDUCATION, YOUR OPTIONS

I. Step One: Examining a School Plan Guide

The participants were divided into small working groups. Each group was given the task to review the School Plan Guide submitted by the Nimitz has No Limits Planning Team. Each of the groups spent 10-12 minutes reviewing the school plan, noted the questions they had and identified whether the school plan met their expectations in the following areas:

- 1) Student Vision
- 2) School Vision
- 3) School Performance: Where is the School Now?
- 4) School Priorities

The following is the captured feedback, questions, and comments the session participants provided as they reviewed each area of the School Plan Guide.

Student Vision

During the small group discussion, and based on the amount of written feedback provided, session participants discussed the importance of students being prepared academically to meet the demands of standardized testing. The following is the written feedback provided on *academic readiness*:

1. For students to be better prepared so that they may reach their dreams with the help of God, teachers, parents and their own efforts.
2. What are the A-G requirements? Even though it has increased in the past, the percentage of students meeting ELA standards is still very low. This tells me that teachers need more professional development. I also think the school needs to focus on all grades, so that all students can successfully pass Algebra—not only 7th grade.
3. Students need to be sufficiently prepared so that they successfully pass the CSTs. I believe students need more instruction because it is hard to understand how year after year most students don't do well.
4. I would like for students to pass the CST and for teachers to pay more attention to students and help them pass Algebra.
5. Better prepare students to pass the CST test.



6. In reality, our school is not meeting the academic standards.

The participants also shared comments about the *student supports* available:

1. What are the necessary requirements for students to be able to graduate from 8th grade? What are the A-G requirements?
2. How can we help students successfully graduate?
3. If the student does not meet the A-G requirements, what supports are available? What are the options? Also, don't only focus on students doing well; support must be available for all students.

The participants shared the importance of identifying parents as critical partners:

1. This plan does prepare students. I would like for there to be more parent workshops that explain the importance of A-G.
2. For parents to always be informed so that we are on top of our children, their progress, and their behavior.

Additional Comments:

1. To motivate students with acknowledgements.
2. It is missing a school security plan.

School Vision

Session participants also discussed in small groups and through written feedback the importance of a positive school environment, including school and student safety. The following is the written feedback provided on *school environment*:

1. For the school to have more programs, a positive environment, and for students to feel safe. Also, to provide help when students need it.
2. It is very important that school has great teachers, good habits, and for all to work together in partnership.
3. The students need more security, individual academic support, and constant communication between parents and teachers.
4. The school vision failed to mention how it will provide an environment where the student feels safe. Respect is a priority. Promoting an environment in which a student is safe and respected is necessary for better learning.
5. To have more security in the bathrooms...NOTE: the rest of the comment is illegible.
6. For there to be more security for students in the bathroom because there are often fights.
7. To have more security in our school.

Session participants also expressed an interest in having a stronger school-parent partnership to increase student outcomes and support a college-going culture. The following is the written feedback provided on *school-parent partnerships*:

1. For the school to inform us when it has problems and to let us know when a teacher has left, because they don't usually tell us.



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2. For there to be more workshops for parents to learn how we can best help our children be college-ready.
3. How can the school better prepare parents to understand college requirements so that our students go directly to college after high school.
4. For all stakeholders, including students, teachers, school administration, and parents to follow through on their roles and responsibilities. For the school to have quality teachers that are willing to work with parents and students to develop a relationship based on communication, respect, and good habits.
5. For the teachers, parents, and students to work together and for teachers to have patience with the students.

Additional comment:

1. Explain how this plan will address the teachers who need training in classroom management and effective communication so that students are excited to attend class every day.

School Performance: Where is the School Now?

During the small group discussion, and based on the amount of written feedback provided, session participants discussed the importance of continuing to improve student outcomes. The following is the written feedback provided on *student outcomes*:

1. API and AYP progress.
2. The school is improving, but we need more of an effort, change in strategies, and motivating our students. The school needs to identify the needs of specific student groups and provide them with the support, information, and motivation to increase capacity.
3. For the school to better explain the significance of AYP and API. Students must increase scores in Algebra and math.
4. API progress in ELA.
5. We have not reached our AYP goals and I hope this plan helps. The school also does not provide all children with SAT practice, and we need to see the data for all academic areas.
6. ELA data for Special education students has decreased from 11.2% to 10.9% in 2010-2011. How can the school increase these data points?
7. How is the school supporting students that have not learned? How can the school change its strategies and work with the parents to increase the achievement of all students?
8. I think that budget cuts had made it difficult to support students. Also, some teachers are not doing everything they can to help the students.

The participants also shared the importance of increasing *parent engagement* and *communication between parents and school*:

1. How are students going to be prepared to go to college? What strategies are being implemented to engage parents? We want there to be more communication between schools.



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2. I have a problem with the way parent-teacher conferences are conducted. The school is making phone calls saying that “If your student is doing well he/she is not required to attend the parent-teacher conference.” This eliminates the chance to reward a child’s achievement. It takes away the importance of doing well in school. You can’t underestimate a child’s achievement.
3. Motivate parents to become involved in the child’s education.

School Priorities

During the small group discussion, and based on written feedback provided, session participants discussed the importance of continuing to engage parents to become true partners in their child’s success. The following is the written feedback provided on *parent partnerships*:

1. As parents we need to be more involved with the teachers as well as motivate our students. Also, attend more parent-teacher conferences.
2. Work as team, be consistent, and support all for a better community.

The participants also shared the importance of providing teachers with *professional development* to better support students and their outcomes:

1. Training for teachers so they understand how their behavior is either motivating or not motivating the student. How to change bad behavior to positive behavior. Why do some teachers leave and why do others stay?
2. I would like the school personnel to better motivate the students so that they increase achievement.
3. The priority must be students and their hopes to go to college. The personnel must better motivate the students.
4. The plan mentions teacher-planning committees, but how will they be able to do this? I would like to see more data because I don’t see the necessary results. The teacher training available is not resulting in the necessary gains. How can you prove there will be gains?

Additional Comment:

1. Have a stable principal.



Session 3 Report – Dialogues with Planning Teams

This section is Split into 3 pieces: 1) The Planning Team Presentation, the 2) Q&A time and the 3) Suggestions/Comments that were shared during the dialogue.

Planning Team Name: **Nimitz has No Limits**

1. Planning Team Presentation

The team provided session participants with a quick summary of all four sections of their plan. A bilingual copy of the summary was provided to each of the participants. Several of the team members were present, including: Mary Mills, Assistant Principal (AP); Juan Perez, Magnet Coordinator; Amparo Mendoza, Parent Representative Coordinator and Raquel Toscano, parent volunteer. These individuals spoke on behalf of the team to introduce and describe the school plan:

- The team described their 5 priority areas, including:
 1. Increasing the number of students proficient in writing and reading comprehension;
 2. Increasing the number of students eligible for Algebra;
 3. Decreasing the number of Long-term English learners;
 4. Increasing the percentage of Students with Disabilities mainstreamed in regular classes; and
 5. Increasing parent involvement.
- The team mentioned that scores in ELA had been increasing, but there was still some work to do in order to meet their goals.
- The Assistant Principal (AP), a member of the team, said Nimitz had to continue to focus on reclassifying many of its Long-term English learners, since many of them have been an EL for several years.
- The AP also mentioned the number of minutes Special Education students spend in mainstream classrooms has increased, but they would like to continue to increase the amount.
- Members of the team agreed that parent involvement was key to their continued growth and would be developing strategies to increase engagement.

2. Questions and Answers

The following were questions directed to the team after sharing the different sections:

1. **One of the participants** asked, “Since I don’t have a copy of the entire plan today, after I have read the entire plan, and if my concern is not already addressed, how do I make sure it will be included?” A **member of the PSC team** replied that many of the participants that had attended the workshops have brought up a variety of concerns and it may already be captured, however, all PSC schools will continue with an implementation phase and parents will be invited to participate as well.



2. When discussing the *School Vision* **one of the session participants** said, “There is information missing regarding how teachers will be trained to help create a welcoming environment in the classroom.” One of the **team members** replied that hours of professional development would continue to be provided to teachers. He acknowledged that some teachers do a better job than others in helping to create a positive environment, but it would be required for all teachers to have some PD in this area, as well as others areas identified by the teacher and administrator.
3. **Participant:** “Do you let parents know how students are progressing in reading and math on the standardized tests, or do you just tell the students?” A **member of the team** responded that a letter is sent home after every test informing parents how their child has done. **Follow up:** “What if my student needs additional support, how do I know the resources that are available?” **Team member:** “You can speak with your student’s teacher or come to the main office and someone can help you.”
4. **Participant:** “Students need more safety, student supports, constant communication between school, students, and parents, and individual academic support.” **Team member:** “There have been many cuts to our school, and it is integral for you all to be part of our team. For example, in terms of support, students may think they understand while sitting in the classroom, but once they get home they may tell you that they don’t understand. We need your help in making sure this is communicated to their teacher. If your student needs additional tutoring, make sure that you understand exactly what type of additional help they need. Please talk to your teacher and counselor so that they can help you find tutoring that will be useful to them. Also everything that happens at this school is available on our school website. We send fliers home and follow up with calls. We want parents to be up-to-date.”

One of the session participants included that attending school meetings was critical to knowing what was happening with their child and the school.

5. **Participant:** “Is the advanced (gifted) program included in this plan? I don’t see anyone from the program represented in your team?” **Team member:** “Yes, the program is included; the member of our team that leads this work could not be here because she has a class at this time.”
6. **Participant:** “I am getting phone calls telling me that parents of students that are doing well in class don’t have to come to the upcoming parent-teacher meetings.” **Team member:** “It was actually me (Magnet School Coordinator) who sent all those calls, and what I wanted to make sure was that parents who still needed to develop a plan for



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their child were my first priority. All parents are welcomed, but I want to make sure that those parents that had yet to see me attend these meetings.”

7. **Participant:** “There are some activities that require authorization for participation from my child, and because I did not approve the last activity, in fact, I never saw the document, she got points deducted. I did not want her to participate, but she shouldn’t have been punished, what can I do in the future?” PSC team requested that this be answered after the session, but one of the team members quickly replied that in the future the parent should write the school a note that he/she saw the request, but would not approve it.
8. **Participant:** “Regarding the school priorities identified before, I have a special education student and you mentioned mainstreaming them, what type of supervision will you provide to make sure that they are not harassed by other students?” **Team member:** “Yes, we will have staff available at all times to supervise and will take the necessary precautionary measures.”
9. **Participant:** “What can schools do to help parents better understand how they can help support their student become college-ready?” **Team member:** The school provides opportunities for you to meet with the counselor, which includes you and the student. If you can’t attend, you can request that a meeting be set up with only your student. Parents need to let the schools know what they prefer. During the meeting, the counselor reviews the necessary classes and grades the student must take in middle and high school to be prepared for college. **Another participant included:** There is also other community programs, such as PIQE, that provide information to parents on what is needed to be college and career ready. Budgets have caused schools to cut these programs, but once funds become available again you should request this from your school.

- **Suggestions/Comments made by parents during dialogue**

1. After reading a portion of the *School Plan Priorities to Turnaround Student Performance* section, one of the participants said, “I am not clear on the AVID strategy?” Before providing an answer, the AP reviewed the five identified school priorities and then described how AVID is a strategy that prepares students to go to college. She mentioned that there are five elements to AVID: writing, inquiring to promote critical thinking, comprehension, organization, and reading, and as part of the school plan, teachers will receive the necessary professional development to ensure the AVID elements are properly implemented.



Follow up question: “Can 6th grade students participate in AVID or do they have to wait?”

AP: “The AVID program is small, currently serving only 7th and 8th graders, but we are trying to grow it and hope that all teachers understand the strategies so that they can implement the program throughout.”

Follow up question: “How can I get my student to be a part of it?”

AP: The program is currently available to students that need additional support to be college-ready, so there are certain requirements, such as a 2.0 GPA or better, participate in a round of interviews, must be first in the family to go to college, and have a strong interest because it requires additional commitment.

Participants had additional questions regarding how students could qualify and how the program must grow to serve a larger number of students. The team assured them that even though the program will eventually grow, they expect to provide professional development to an increased number of teachers.

2. After the presentation of the *Student Vision*, **one of the session participants** said: “The vision failed to address student and school safety.” **One of teachers** replied that the information provided was a summary of the entire plan and the document provided to the session participants only included the most important pieces.

The participant replied that safety is important and should be made a priority. A member clarified that they did consider it important but only put answers to the questions directly asked on the document, and reiterated that the full length proposal (available on the school website) addressed safety, however, she mentioned that they would add it to the document and continue to make it available on the school website.

3. **Participant:** “To ensure student success, it is important for all students to have a quiet place at home. How can we include this as part of the necessary learning environments needed?” **Team member:** “There is a piece on the plan that addresses the home-school compact. This document provides recommendations on the roles and responsibilities of parents, and this is one of those pieces that are included.”



Session 3 Report – Participant Feedback Form Responses

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK FORM NARRATIVE & RESPONSES

Total forms: 30

1. Student Vision	Does Not Meet My Expectations	Partially Meets My Expectations	Meets My Expectations	Exceeds My Expectations
The writing team identified the skills and knowledge that students will gain to be prepared for the next level of learning.	0	10	13	6
The writing team has clearly identified what students will know, understand, and be able to do when they leave this school.	0	5	16	7
TOTALS PER COLUMN	0	15	29	13
NOTE: 2 forms missing partial or full answer to question.				

Narrative: List common themes that were discussed (comments you heard) and written in the feedback forms.

Session participants included statements which questioned the actual strategies the school planned to use to meet its goals:

1. How will the school acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to accomplish this goal?
2. I think it needs to be specified where parents have to go when the student needs additional help or when they are falling behind in their coursework.
3. How are they going to prepare students to be college-ready?
4. They need additional support to reach their goals successfully.

Participants also expressed the vision was missing information:

1. I agree with the school's vision in meeting their academic goals. However, I feel the team failed to mention student safety and its promotion of respect among students and faculty. It is very important that students feel safe and respected. I believe these points are so important that it should have been stated in the school's rational report.
2. The students must feel confident in what he/she can accomplish.
3. I would have liked for the whole plan to be shared and not just portions of it.
4. Focus on all areas, please!

A couple of the participants expressed liking the vision:

1. Very good, I like all the information that was provided.
2. Good plan.



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2. School Vision	Does Not Meets My Expectations	Partially Meets My Expectations	Meets My Expectations	Exceeds My Expectations
The writing team has identified what the school culture will feel like for parents and students.	0	5	20	3
The writing team has identified what the school must do to make sure that all students are successful and prepared to go to the next school level and beyond.	2	2	19	5
TOTALS PER COLUMN	2	7	39	8
NOTE: 3 forms missing partial or full answer to question.				

Narrative: List common themes that were discussed (comments you heard) and written in the feedback forms.

Session participants included statements on how the school should continue to promote school-home partnerships to increase student achievement:

1. I think that as parents we need to all be more involved and motivate one another to attend other workshops to receive more information. These are very important. I would also like the importance of culture to be included in the plan so that our children don't forget where they come from and where they are going.
2. Parents need to be informed on all parts of the plan as well as how our children are progressing and if they need additional help, to give it to them.
3. Parents, teachers, and students must work together to improve grades.

Participants also expressed the need for the school to continue to provide students and teachers with the necessary support to improve student achievement:

1. According to school results on the School Report Card, students in the 6th grade are doing well but 7th and 8th grades students are doing poorly, this is where the school should continue to focus.
2. The importance of the standardized tests should be better promoted among the students, motivate those that have to take them, and provide SAT practice tests so that when they go to high school they are better prepared, are not lost and know what it is they have to do.
3. Explain how this plan will address the teachers who need training in classroom management and effective communication with students so that they are excited to attend class every day.

One participant expressed her/his support for the school vision:

1. I agree with all. It was well explained, thanks.



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3. Student Performance: Where is the School Now?	Does Not Meet My Expectations	Partially Meets My Expectations	Meets My Expectations	Exceeds My Expectations
The writing team identified areas within the school's performance that highlight areas of strength.	1	9	13	5
The writing team identified areas of concern where growth is needed.	0	5	18	6
The writing team demonstrated a thorough analysis of data to address the needs of all student groups.	0	6	17	6
TOTALS PER COLUMN	1	20	48	17

Narrative: List common themes that were discussed (comments you heard) and written in the feedback forms.

Session participants included statements on how certain pieces of the plan require additional thought and clarity to ensure the needs of all students are met:

1. I think that we need to better motivate our students, for example, one day a week or once a month publically recognize students.
2. How to work together to increase student achievement in language arts for Special Education students.
3. I think they really need to focus in all areas, in order to be a good professional.

Participants also included statements on how the school should continue to promote parent engagement to increase student achievement:

1. One of the areas that need improvement is parent involvement. Motivation is missing, so if there were some strategies identified to make it mandatory, it would make it better.
2. For the school to better explain how we can help our children be better prepared to go to college.

Some of the participants expressed how the school still needs to do some work to continue to improve:

1. I believe our current scores are not where they should be. We can't say we have a successful school if the students are underperforming.
2. The plan is good, now I want to see results.
3. It partially meets my expectations because the plan has improved, but the school is still not doing well.
4. Based on the documents provided, I am not sure if everything was addressed in the plan.

One participant expressed her/his support for the school plan:

1. Thank you for all the information. As a mother, thank you for all your support.

NOTE: 2 forms missing partial or full answer to question.



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4. School Turnaround: School Plan Priorities	Does Not Meet My Expectations	Partially Meets My Expectations	Meets My Expectations	Exceeds My Expectations
The writing team identified the top priorities for the school to improve student achievement.	2	3	17	6
The writing team clearly demonstrated that they know where the school is now and what needs to be done to get to the school of the future where all students are high achievers.	0	1	21	8
The writing team identified various strategies that will be used to ensure the success of students.	1	0	21	7
The writing team identified support that is needed for their faculty and staff to turnaround the school.	2	2	19	6
TOTALS PER COLUMN	5	6	78	27
NOTE: 2 forms missing partial or full answer to question.				

Narrative: List common themes that were discussed (comments you heard) and written in the feedback forms.

Session participants expressed certain priorities were missing from the plan:

1. Teachers also need support. Helping students is great, but it starts with support for the teacher first.
2. There is too much focus on underachieving students. My student excels in the Magnet program and I feel his needs are not met. Personnel in this committee seem to take my criticism as a personal attack on their work.
3. Let me tell you, I know you have it in the plan but you have to mention the safety of the students. It is the best way that students can feel motivated and increase their performance. Also, offer incentives for students that have good grades.

Other session participants expressed they liked the plan as is:

1. Everything was good. I learned a lot and I dedicated my time to something that will help our children.
2. Everything was well explained. Great job.
3. The plan identified all the areas that need to be strengthened.

One session participant expressed the importance of parent engagement to ensure success of the plan:

1. Ask parents of each and every student to be involved in the education of their children.