

Rhode Island Department of Education  
Office for Diverse Learners

School Support System Report and Support Plan for the  
Blackstone Academy Charter School  
June 1, 2010

# **SCHOOL SUPPORT SYSTEM**

## **A Collaborative System of Focused Monitoring**

### Introduction

The purpose of the School Support System (SSS) is to provide a means of accountability for delivery of programs and services for students with exceptionalities. The School Support System model is designed to promote the involvement of the whole school district, general educators as well as special educators and parents. It is designed to learn if the district meets the regulations and what effects programs and services have on student outcomes. Finally, the SSS develops a school support plan for training and technical assistance.

To accomplish this the SSS includes these components:

- **The Orientation Meeting** The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) staff meets with the Local Education Agency (LEA) to plan the site review and identify issues or initiatives that may influence programs or service delivery.
- **Data Analysis Meeting** The RIDE staff meets to review LEA demographic information on selected reports including: the LEA annual plan, census information, and information collected through record review, staff questionnaires and parent interviews. To ensure that the child is at the center of the study, all analyses begin with the child. Thus, a sample of approximately 30 students with exceptionalities is selected; the records of these students are reviewed; their parents, teachers and related service providers are interviewed, and their classrooms are observed. The result is an in-depth, unified examination of the actual provision of programs and services for students with exceptionalities. The RIDE staff compiles a preliminary summary of their analyses of this data.
- **Presentation by the LEA and School Site Review** The on-site review begins with a presentation of programs by teachers and staff. The presentation provides the review team with general and specific information on delivery of programs and services to students. Following this presentation, on-site reviews to all schools are made. The team members interview school administrators and teaching staff. Parents and central office staff are also interviewed. The team gathers sufficient information and works with the LEA personnel to generate a report, covering the following:
  - The district's compliance with the state and federal regulations, relative to the education of students with exceptionalities.
  - The quality and effectiveness of programs and services provided by the district.
  - The need for professional development and technical assistance that will enable the LEA to improve programs and services.
- **The Support Plan** The RIDE team, LEA central office and building administrators meet to review the data and complete a report of results. The group designs a professional development/technical assistance support plan with timelines for implementation. This plan enables the school and district to correct areas of non-compliance and to strengthen promising programs and correct areas of weakness in order to improve services and programs for all students.
- **The SSS Report** The report summarizes the findings from the various data sources. The format of the report uses four divisions: Indicators, Findings, Documentation, and Support Plan. Indicators describe either performance or compliance. Findings can include a variety of some six categories, from School Improvement to Free Appropriate Public Education in the Least Restrictive Environment. The documentation section of the report distinguishes the source of the finding. The support plan reflects the response to the described findings. The support plan describes the corrective action required by the district as well as resources and time lines to improve programs and services.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1. School Improvement /Family Engagement
2. Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)
3. Evaluation/ Individual Education Plan (IEP)
4. Transition

Blackstone Academy Charter School  
School Support System Review  
June 1 -, 2010

Team: Jane Keane and Susan Wood

1. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT OVERVIEW / FAMILY ENGAGEMENT					
Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Result	1	<p><b>School Improvement</b>            Blackstone Academy was established as a charter school in the fall of 2002. The school was formed in order to start a school of choice to increase the number of students from Pawtucket and Central Falls who would graduate from high school and go on to higher education.</p> <p>Blackstone Academy Charter School is an academic setting for secondary school students (grades 9 – 12) who reside in Pawtucket and Central Falls. The focus of the program provides students with a college preparatory instructional setting. The school is an educational environment that fosters independent inquiry, teamwork and communication, enabling students to develop the skills and values that lead to success in both academic and social arenas.</p> <p>The charter school is a member school of the Coalition of Essential Schools, The Small Schools Network of Facing History and Ourselves, ASCD Healthy Schools Communities, KIDS Consortium and the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce.</p> <p>Blackstone Academy Charter School Strategic Plan addresses ten specific results the school will achieve by the end of the 2009 - 2010 academic year. The following policies, practices and or other capacities will be established.</p> <p>Blackstone Academy Charter School will;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design and implement a process for the supervision and evaluation of teaching faculty as well as vehicles for teachers to communicate, share effective practices and problem solving in an atmosphere of mutual support and accountability.</li> </ul>	Document Faculty, Parent and Student Interviews Classroom Observation		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Design and implement a creative and responsive program of internal; professional development that is based on a needs assessment rooted in BACS's key learning areas: differentiated instruction &amp; learning, mastery skills, and service-learning.</li><li>• Develop and implement a consistent structure for classroom learning and program through which there is a school wide-cross curricula focused on a particular aspect of learning and skill development that is emphasized by academic quarter in all classrooms.</li><li>• Develop and implement a process for mentoring new staff members.</li><li>• Implement a process for reviewing reliable student performance data and using it for planning.</li><li>• Develop and implement an annual calendar of parent activities and events to engage them as full partners in the educational life of the school and will work with faculty to cultivate strategies that empower parents in their roles as partners.</li><li>• Identify at-risk students early through diagnostic assignments and develop targeted intervention through students' individual learning plans.</li><li>• Expand and enhance its website and other communication technologies to facilitate the flow of information in diverse ways.</li><li>• Expand and diversify its Board of Directors and School Council with appropriate community members.</li></ul>			
--	--	---	--	--	--

		<p>The Blackstone Academy Strategic Team/Board of Directors is comprised of the school administrators, general and special educators, parents and community members. The Team/Board meets monthly with sub-committee activities held as appropriate.</p> <p>The Blackstone Academy additionally facilitates a school council to assist in decisions regarding school policies and the promotion of the school's interest in the community overall. The council is composed of students, parents/caregivers, staff, Board and community members. Students who participate on this council are members of the student government.</p>			
Result	2	<p><b>Professional Development</b>  Professional development at Blackstone Academy is provided for faculty and staff through a variety of job embedded opportunities. A collaborative assessment is facilitated annually to identify the priorities for professional development. Professional development and training will address the academic, social emotional and/or behavioral health needs of the students for the upcoming school year. The focus for school wide professional development is currently addressing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data Project / PowerSchool</li> <li>• Asperger's</li> <li>• Differentiated Instruction</li> <li>• Modification – ABC's</li> <li>• Learning Styles</li> <li>• ADHD</li> <li>• IEP Planning</li> <li>• Training Planning Inventory (TPI)</li> <li>• Geometry Software / Sketch Pad</li> <li>• Lap Top Carts.</li> </ul>	Document Faculty Interviews Classroom Observations		
Result	3	<b>Instructional Strategies and Supports</b>	Document		

	<p>Teaching at Blackstone Academy is based on inquiry-based learning strategies utilizing differentiated instructional techniques that are responsive to the multiple intelligences and which incorporate the arts, technology, and an emphasis on developing literacy in all its dimensions.</p> <p>Academic courses are facilitated through a block schedule and organized according to new curriculum frameworks and instructional standards for traditional academic disciplines (language arts, mathematics, social studies, the sciences and world languages). In addition Blackstone Academy has developed criteria for four related tiers of portfolio work that is based on the school's "circles of community" that students must successfully complete to graduate.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Self-understanding</li> <li>2. The intimate circle-relationships with peers, family, and school community members</li> <li>3. Civic Responsibilities – relationships and obligations as a resident of Pawtucket or Central Falls</li> <li>4. Global Understanding – relationships as a member of the inter-connected global community (this is the Senior Project)</li> </ol> <p><b>Use of student assessment and performance data</b>  The Blackstone Academy Charter School administration and faculty review student data through a number of structured and informal processes. Faculty review various assessments such as the NWEA, WJ III and the NECAP along with teacher generated assessments, review of student work and performance along with classroom observations to discuss instructional strategies and cross content area planning.</p> <p>Teachers are provided with individual student and team</p>	Faculty , Parent and Student Interviews Classroom Observation		
--	--	---	--	--

	<p>NECAP results along with a protocol to assist in the identification and development of instructional strategies and support to improve student performance outcomes.</p> <p>Blackstone Academy additionally uses PowerSchool to track attendance and academic performance.</p> <p>Blackstone Academy facilitates a Student Support Team to address students academic, social emotional and/or behavioral health challenges as it relates to Response to Intervention (RtI) activities. The Student Support Team is comprised of school administrators, support staff and educators as determined by the student being reviewed. The team reviews student data to identify instructional strategies, such as direct and/or small group instruction, supporting social emotional needs or through project based activities determined by student's strengths and needs. RtI activities are addressed through the Student Support Team and/or the grade level common planning. The Student Support Team meets weekly and/or more if needed. Structured Progress Monitoring activities vary in structure and implementation. As an RtI process the Student Support Team is emerging.</p> <p>Common planning for grade level teams is held once a week. Teams address student data along with school wide typical activities, scheduling and problem solving.</p> <p>(Grade level common planning team design includes 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade meet weekly, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grade meet twice a month and or more if needed.)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>SPIRIT PROGRAM</b></p> <p>The Blackstone Academy SPIRIT Educational Program is an enrichment and college-prep program that offers outreach to students, tutoring, mentoring support along with a summer program to build academic skills and</p>			
--	--	--	--	--

		<p>enhancing interest in higher education. This initiative is provided for middle and high school students of Central Falls and Pawtucket.</p> <p>After school activities are currently supported by a 21<sup>st</sup> Century grant. Students are offered home work support along with many other activities including programs in music and the arts, plays, dance, debate, computers etc. Additional activities support academic and/or social issues such as math tutoring, SAT prep, senior project, along with girls/boys groups.</p> <p>Summer offerings include but are not limited to math, portfolios and summer reading. Anyone who is not meeting proficiency can attend and work one-on-one with staff.</p> <p>Toward the end of summer entering 9th graders participate in a school orientation and community building opportunities event.</p>			
Result	4	<p>Blackstone Academy Charter School facilitates a number of Parent/Guardian/Family engagement activities. Parents/Guardian participates in school wide policy development, support and outreach. The school facilitates and supports a Special Education Advisory Committee (Blackstone Academy Special Education Advisory Committee – BASEAC) which meets quarterly and is comprised of parents, teachers and administrators. The committee plans presentations to support families of students with individual education plans and provides information regarding the changes in the IDEA that may impact families overall. Activities include but are not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BASEAC Brochure / By-Laws</li> <li>• Parent Survey</li> <li>• Parent Workshops - Homework Workshop -</li> </ul>	Document Faculty and Family Interviews		

		<p>Computer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RIPIN - Family Friendly Assessment</li> </ul>			
Result	5	<p><u>School Efforts to Partner with Parents Survey:</u> SEPPS is the statewide measurement tool that yields a valid, reliable standardized score indicating how a district is performing against a standard score. It measures a district's rate of parent participation and yields an agreeability score of those parents whose children have an IEP.</p> <p>The Blackstone Academy Charter School March 2009 SEPPS results were as follows: Of those parents with a child receiving special education services, the percent of parents that participated were 10%. Of those that reported that their school's efforts to involve parents, as a means of improving services and results for children with disabilities, the districts scores yielded as follows: an empty cell was reported as the number of respondents were less than 10.</p>	<p>Consolidated Resource Plan (CRP) Faculty Interview</p>		

<b>2. FREE APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE LEAST RESTRICTIVE ENVIRONMENT (FAPE/LRE)</b>					
Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Result	1	<p>Based on the FY July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2009 State Performance Plan information on Blackstone Academy Program Placement Data is as follows:</p> <p>The percentage of students educated 80 to 100% of the time in general education settings is 100%. (RI District Average is 62.85%)</p> <p>Percentage of students educated for less than 40% of the time in general education settings is 0.00% (RI District Average is 18.11%)</p> <p>Percentage of students educated in private separate schools, homebound/hospitalized and private residential</p>	<p>Document Faculty, Parent and Student Interviews Classroom Observations</p>		

		<p>schools is 0.00% (RI District Average is 4.85%)</p> <p>If a district is 1 standard deviation from the RI district average the district is considered discrepant for the target. Blackstone <i>is not</i> discrepant in any of the above data categories. Note: This is not a compliance indicator.</p>			
Result	2	<p><b>Program Continuum</b></p> <p>There are currently 163 students attending Blackstone Academy. Of that total 22 students have Individual Education Plans (IEP's). Specialized instruction for students with individual education plans is provided in 80% to 100% within the general education settings. Resource teachers work in content area classes along with the general education teacher. Students are provided small group and/or individual instruction outside of the general education setting as needed.</p>	Document Faculty Interviews		
Result	3	<p><b>School Removals/Disciplinary Policies</b></p> <p>Behavioral expectations along with disciplinary actions protocols and policies are comprehensively defined in student hand book.</p> <p>Students with chronic truancy issues participate in the Truancy program at Blackstone Academy. The school has their own Truancy Court in conjunction with the RI Family Court. To enable students to maintain their attendance, he/she can request to "buy back" an absence. In doing so the student arrives on time to every course and meeting for one week. If they meet this challenge their number of absences will be reduced by one.</p>	Document Faculty Interviews		
Result	4	<p><b>Personalization / Social Emotional Resources / Positive Behavioral Interventions And Supports</b></p> <p>Throughout the school there was evidence of whole school community opportunities to support not only the whole school climate, but provides individual students mentoring,</p>	Document Faculty and Student Interviews		

		clinical support along with topical group discussions.  <b>Blackstone Academy Advisory</b> Each student at Blackstone Academy is assigned an advisor. The advisor oversees designated student's grades, projects, and portfolios and is additionally responsible to assist students with career and college planning. An advisor will meet with his/her advisee's daily and/or through small group's activities targeting specific topics and/or student academic responsibilities.			
Compliance	5	During the time of this reporting there were educational staff at Blackstone Academy who were not certified by RIDE, Office of Educator Quality. These include but are not limited to the following:  -Physical education/health -Social Worker -Psychologist -Others as identified by Title II A	Document Review Faculty Interviews Observation	Title IIA is in the process of facilitating a staffing plan review with the school and will work with Blackstone Academy to clarify and rectify these issues.  Timeline: Immediately and ongoing. Progress Check: 12/2010	All educational and social service staff are presently certified by RIDE. All certifications were complete when hiring was completed in October 2010.

3. EVALUATION/ INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP)					
Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Result	1	<b>Evaluation Procedures And Protocols</b>  <b>Record Review</b> Records of approximately 3 students were reviewed prior to the on-site review by the visiting team. These were selected through a stratified random selection technique to allow the team to consider a representative variety of students. Students' records reviewed were accessible and well organized.  The following findings illustrate the themes that emerged from the record review that will require continued professional development:	Document Faculty Interviews Record Review	Assurances will be provided to the RI Department of Education, Office for Diverse Learners that compliance issues are addressed and rectified. This Support Plan is applicable for all compliance findings in this section.  Timeline: Immediately and ongoing. Progress Check: 12/2010	These finding were reviewed with the Special Education Director and School Administrators in June 2010. Professional Development occurred with all staff in August and is on-going which will ensure that future IEPs have all

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual IEP items were not documented and or completed</li> <li>• Need for Measurability of information posed</li> <li>• Information posed needing to be specific/detail</li> </ul>			individual items well documented, measurability of information is improved and more specified information is contained.
--	---	--	--	---

**4. TRANSITION**

Indicator		Findings	Documentation	Support Plan	Follow-up Findings
Result	1	<p><b>Transition Planning / Vocational Assessments</b></p> <p>When a student has been accepted to attend Blackstone Academy, the special education administrator interviews the student and his/her teachers from the sending school. Educators review all relevant data to assist in the development of an appropriate IEP along with course selection that reflects the goals and objectives the student's plans to engage in while attending Blackstone Academy.</p> <p>Starting in the freshman year all 9<sup>th</sup> grade students engage in some level of vocational exploration including post secondary planning. Interest inventories such as WaytoGoRI, the Transition Planning Inventory and/or Career Games are tools available for students to engage in. For students who are eligible, through Northern RI Collaborative/ORS will provide students with assessments leading to work exploration. (which has included: Public Safety, Food Preparation and Retail)</p> <p>Additional Activities Include/but not limited to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All 9<sup>th</sup> graders research and visit local colleges and attend college fairs sponsored by the school and SPIRIT.</li> <li>• Financial Aid Night</li> <li>• Guest Speakers</li> <li>• NRIC Activities</li> </ul>	Document Faculty and Students Interviews		

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internships</li> <li>• Job Shadows</li> <li>• Volunteer Opportunities</li> </ul>			
Result	2	<p><b>Post Secondary Planning</b>  Blackstone Academy's proficiency based graduation requirements include course work along with individual demonstration of academic and personal skill development. In addition to completing required courses, students will complete and present their portfolio demonstrating the required criteria for each of the four levels.</p> <p>Students work toward proficiency in the six core content areas aligned to most college requirements for college admission and in applied learning skills (critical thinking, problem solving, research, communication and personal and social responsibility).</p> <p><i>Required Course Work</i>  4 credits in English  4 credits in Math  3 credits in Science (including 2 years in lab)  3 credits in Social Studies  2 credits in World Language  2 credits in Community Improvement Projects  2 credits in Arts  1.5 credits in Physical Education  .5 credits in Health</p> <p><i>Community Improvement Projects (CIP)</i> are interdisciplinary class's emphasizing the mastery of Applied Learning Standards. Skills obtained through the CIP completion may include strategic planning skills, telephone communication, interviewing, proposal writing and problem solving.</p> <p>As a part of the graduation process for students attending Blackstone Academy a portfolio system has been</p>	Document Faculty, Parent and Student Interviews Record Review		

		<p>developed. Students demonstrate proficiency through projects, performances, essays and journals. The portfolios embrace the “Habits of Mind” including Self Understanding, Expression, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Organization, Attentiveness, Involvement and Reflection.</p> <p>Level 1: Concept of Self (to be completed by the end of 9<sup>th</sup> grade)</p> <p>Level 2: Student’s Personal Community (to be completed by the end of 10<sup>th</sup> grade)</p> <p>Level 3: Civic Engagement (to be completed by the end of 11<sup>th</sup> grade)</p> <p>Level 4: Senior Project (in area of interest incorporating all eight “Habits of Mind” to be completed by the end of 12<sup>th</sup> grade)</p> <p><i>If students have not completed the grade level portfolio requirements by the end of the school year, they are mandated to attend a summer and/or after school program to complete and present their portfolio.</i></p> <p>A Summary of Performance is provided for each student at the time of graduation to utilize as needed.</p>			
Result	3	<p>The Blackstone graduation rate is 67.90% for all students with a special education graduation rate of 66.70%. The all student rate is lower than the State graduation rate for all students (73.90%) and the graduation rate for students with special needs is higher than the state rate of 55.90% for students with special needs.</p> <p>The Blackstone dropout rate is 7.10% for all students with a special education dropout rate of 33.33%. The all student rate is lower than the State dropout rate for all students (15.50%) but the dropout rate for students with special needs is higher compared to the State dropout rate for students with special needs (26.80%).</p>	Document Review		

		Blackstone has outlined its efforts to reduce the dropout rate and increase the graduation rate via the Consolidated Resource Plan (IDEA-Part B federal funding application).			
--	--	---	--	--	--