



MID-POINT REVIEW SUMMARY STRATEGIC PLAN 2008-2013

EASTERN
CENTER FOR ARTS AND TECHNOLOGY

The current Strategic Plan was developed with input from over 175 individuals representing Eastern Center for Arts and Technology (EASTERN) stakeholders and adopted in August of 2008. The plan will continue to guide EASTERN's planning, activities and budget development through 2013. The action plans developed for the six goals have guided EASTERN's journey during the past two and one half years to increase student success.

In November of 2011, a formal mid-point review of the status of implementing the plan was conducted by the 26 member planning team - 20 of whom served on the original planning team. This report summarizes the findings and recommendations of the planning team.

While Enhancing Student Success is specifically addressed in Goal 1 of the Strategic Plan, the remaining five goals of the plan are supportive of this primary goal. Enhancing Student Success is and will remain the central focus of planning at EASTERN.

Many of the activities conducted under the five remaining goals of the plan are critical components of an overall

strategy to maximize student success at EASTERN. The goal directed at Successful Student Recruitment is integral to and supportive of the goal to improve student success - getting the right students into the right programs for the right reasons. The ongoing development and 2010 upgrade of the Data Warehouse specified in the Technology goal provides the means to collect, analyze and share student success data with participating schools. This data is central to maintaining and enhancing the culture of shared responsibility for student success and student goal consciousness by EASTERN and participating schools.

New goals focused on Business Involvement in Program Quality and Leadership Succession have been established to ensure input from stakeholders and to provide quality leadership to assure that EASTERN maintains its focus on accomplishing the goals. The Professional Development goal is focused on providing the knowledge and skills to implement this plan and to improve the teaching/learning process.



GOAL 1: ENHANCING STUDENT SUCCESS

The Plan challenges EASTERN to “sustain and enrich the process of continuous improvement to enable the success of each student attending EASTERN.” Student success is defined as “the measured progress toward consciously developed and meaningful educational goals” with the expectation that “goal consciousness will be at the heart of the relationship between students and EASTERN’s network.”

ACCOMPLISHMENTS & STATUS

The Action Team defined the measures of student success as:

- EASTERN Student Completion Rates
- EASTERN Student Occupational Competency Test
- EASTERN Post-Secondary Placement Rates
- Academic Skills – PSSA Proficiency Standards

Since the inception of EASTERN’s first Strategic Plan, the principles of continuous improvement and data-driven decision making have become an integral part of EASTERN’s culture. The 2010 upgrade of the Data Warehouse as a result of the Technology goal has increased the capacity to collect, analyze and share information concerning student success. Data Warehouse Dashboards provide “just in time” data for staff members to review student success measures. Annual program report cards called Key Indicators of Program Success (KIPS) track the goals for teacher and program improvement using the Professional Development Process (PDP).

Measures of success have been identified and are being evaluated for EASTERN students and sub populations such as special education. These measures were identified through a focus-group process involving the participating schools.

The base measures include:

- Student Completion Rates
- Placement Rates
- Student Occupational Competency Achievement Test (SOCAT) Results - nationally developed and criterion referenced in both knowledge and performance
- Certifications earned while at EASTERN
- Professional Development activities were directed toward improving student performance in reading and writing
- MAX Teaching for teachers to improve reading in the classroom: MAX Teaching provides teachers with specific strategies to help students read and comprehend various reading passages in textbooks and manuals
- Pre and pilot testing to improve SOCAT end-of-program testing
- Implementation of a school-wide grading system with an emphasis on teachers developing a variety of assessments
- 10th Grade Career Expo has been revised as part of a series of admissions protocols to improve the appropriateness of student placement
- 8th Grade Career Expo was piloted in June 2011 for students to gain awareness of career and technical occupations and the associated offerings at EASTERN
- Implementation of new program web pages (MOODLE) that provide students and their guardians 24/7 access to lesson plans, worksheets, homework, and all relevant course information
- Expanded Learning Opportunities, and expansion of these experiences, continue with more opportunities for mock interviews and job shadowing
- Research and development of a new technical math program to replace the current PLATO program is currently underway



- EASTERN is aligning its curricula to state standards and the content of the upcoming Keystone Exams
- Through the Data Warehouse, measures are shared with participating schools in the aggregate and at the individual student level. Measures have been benchmarked where possible against state measures. EASTERN describes the data reports as Key Indicators of District Performance (KIDS)
- Participating schools are engaged in a revision of the admission procedures designed to enhance student success by verifying the students' commitment to their career objective. This is achieved by using industry benchmarked academic skill levels in student advisement and assuring that students have sufficient academic credits to complete their program at EASTERN and graduate.
- Through the activities of the Shared View of Purpose goal, participating schools are actively engaged in monitoring and effecting the success of EASTERN's students.
- Participating schools, in partnership with EASTERN staff, are monitoring student success and implementing joint interventions for those students who are not meeting expectations.
- Written improvement plans are being developed by participating schools for students returning to a program at EASTERN who have not met expectations during the prior year.
- Individual student goal setting has been implemented for the selection of career objectives and post secondary plans and will be further refined during the life of the plan to include fifteen-day goal setting and assessment.

SUMMARY

Student success remains the focus of the activities carried out under the five goals of the Strategic Plan. Combined, these activities form a comprehensive strategy to meet this challenge.

The four indicators of student success at EASTERN are:

- EASTERN Student Completion Rates
Completion of all tasks with a grade of 70% or better
- EASTERN Student Occupational Competency Test (SOCAT) Results Scoring at the Competent or Advanced Levels
- EASTERN Placement Rates
- Academic Skills—PSSA Proficiency Standards
Proficient or Advanced

From 2008 through 2010, EASTERN students have demonstrated considerable improvement in three of the four indicators:

- Completion Rates from 53.0% to 65.4%
- SOCAT Results from 57.6% to 79.9%
- PSSA Proficiency Standards
 - Math from 41.7% to 46.7%
 - Reading from 48.4% to 58.9%
- Placement Rates averaged 79% in 2008 - 2010

Since implementing the Strategic Plan in 2008, the activities conducted under the plan have been primarily directed at increasing student success through implementing best practices; such as, MAX Teaching, goal consciousness, journaling, and Extended Learning Opportunities. Toward that end the foundation of the plan includes data collection, analysis and dissemination; joint planning and interventions with participating schools for student success and monitoring of student progress; identification and benchmarking student success measures and developing a culture of student goal setting. With these infrastructure enhancements in place, emphasis during the remaining years of the plan will be on measuring and improving success for every program, high school and individual.

A critical component in the effort to improve student success is the role of the Student Success Coordinators at EASTERN. In addition to their direct involvement with students who are not experiencing success, they play a critical role in planning and convening the Shared View of Purpose Meeting with participating school representatives. One of the two Student Success Coordinators retired in June 2011. The Joint Operating Committee approved a replacement for this position. It will be important to provide the necessary mentoring and support to assure that the critical services continue to be provided and that the "culture" of the organization is fully understood by the new person.





GOAL 2: SUCCESSFUL STUDENT RECRUITMENT

The Planning Team's charge was to "Implement a process, in collaboration with participating districts, to identify an appropriate student body to meet the demands of business and industry in specific careers."

The team concluded that Successful Student Recruitment is defined as putting the right students in the right programs for the right reasons, and retaining them. Key concepts to achieve the goal are:

- Partnership with districts in career exploration and proper pre-requisite academic preparation
- Partnership between EASTERN and post-secondary institutions

ACCOMPLISHMENTS & STATUS

Emphasis during the first half of the Strategic Plan has been primarily focused on developing a marketing strategy that continues the collaborative efforts between EASTERN and its partners to find and attract the right students and on providing career development/exploration activities that meet the individual needs of participating schools. The following summarizes the activities that have been conducted since the plan was adopted:

- A written Marketing Plan was developed by a sub-committee of the Executive Advisory Committee (EAC) which encompasses all of the recommendations contained in the Strategic Plan.
- All of EASTERN's recruitment materials are now available to the public and participating school personnel in both print and electronic format.

- In addition to EASTERN's web page, the materials are also available to participating schools on the newly-created Counselor Support webpage.
- EASTERN's Facebook page provides information on the school and highlights the successes of current and former students.
- In partnership with participating school personnel, the 10th Grade Career Expo is evaluated and revised each year to assure that it meets the needs of the participating school's career guidance program.
- A pilot project was conducted in 2011 to offer an 8th Grade Career Expo to three participating school districts. The pilot was evaluated as "excellent" by the participating schools and will be expanded to at least one additional participating school in 2012.
- EASTERN's dual enrollment offerings were expanded to include Culinary Arts since the inception of the plan. Dual enrollment possibilities are being investigated for both Protective Services and Automotive Technology.

SUMMARY

All of the recommendations contained in the Successful Student Recruitment Action Plan have been incorporated into EASTERN's formal Marketing Plan, which is reviewed and revised each year by a sub-committee of the EAC with input from participating school district personnel.

EASTERN continues to work through committees of participating high school and middle school personnel to tailor student recruitment activities to specifically meet the needs of the participating school districts. Earlier work with the participating schools confirmed that a "one size fits all" approach to career guidance will not work in Eastern Montgomery County. Since the inception of the plan, all of EASTERN's recruitment and supportive documentation have been converted to an electronic format and are now available to the public and participating schools both in print and electronic format. Dual enrollment offerings have been expanded to include Culinary Arts. Currently, dual enrollment is available to students in Allied Health, Computer Network Administration, Electronics Engineering Technology and Culinary Arts.

The two recommendations that are in the planning stage are:

- Developing an operational plan for coordinating implementation of the Pennsylvania Career and Work

Standards at the participating schools which reflects the experiences participating school students receive at EASTERN.

- Investigating Career Exploration partnership models to establish best practices. Considerable work was done in the late 90s with participating schools on this issue and the efforts of that works will serve as the starting point.

Beginning with the 2012-2013 school year, the number of students in grades 11 and 12 at participating schools will decrease and continue to decrease for the next several years. Even though EASTERN has succeeded in increasing its “market share” from 10.51% in 2009-2010 to 11.05% in 2010-2011, market share will need to increase significantly in order to maintain optimum enrollment at EASTERN. This has implications for future marketing plans and recruitment activities. Failure to increase market share has implications for what programs continue to be offered at EASTERN.

GOAL 3: BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT IN PROGRAM QUALITY

Engage local businesses to ensure the availability of quality programs that meet their needs and the interest of students.

The team concluded that business involvement to improve program quality is an ongoing process at EASTERN. This process has been advanced and deepened with the implementation of a “Data Warehouse” as recommended in the last Strategic Planning cycle. The development of processes that evaluate and analyze the effectiveness of EASTERN programs must be continued.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS & STATUS

EASTERN enjoys the benefits of a well established and mature business advisory committee structure and has put into place the necessary policies and practices to assure their continued effectiveness. This fact is reflected in the plan’s call for “refining” and “expanding” their role at EASTERN. To date, a number of actions were taken to carry out this charge. These actions are listed below, with several remaining in the planning stage.

- The process to identify potential new programs that reflect the real needs of industry and student interest has

been started. EASTERN has developed a front-end discovery phase that systematically examines the employment and post-secondary market. Combined with student and guidance staff surveys, the process should be completed by June of 2012. The added front-end is designed to query a broad range of sources to verify the viability of current programs and seeks to uncover new program opportunities.

- An employer survey was developed and field tested in 2010, but the evaluation of its usefulness suggests that we need to rethink the process. This will be done during the remainder of the plan. Our efforts to remain in contact with former students included the resumption of the student follow-up survey; the modification of EASTERN’s web page to enable graduates to stay in contact; the addition of Facebook which highlights current and former student successes; and the addition of former students to the Foundation’s mailing list. While the plan suggests the formation of an Alumni Association, the level of interest and support for such an organization has not yet been confirmed with former students.

SUMMARY

Major emphasis to date has been on expanding the involvement and effectiveness of the business community in EASTERN’s educational activities. The Executive Advisory Committee and Occupational Advisory Committee structures continue to distinguish EASTERN as one of the leaders in this area. The fine tuning of this system will continue as an ongoing activity during the life of the plan.

A plan to follow-up with students who have entered post-secondary programs in the area in which they were trained is a priority for the remainder of the plan. The type of information that can be obtained from a five-year study and be of value to program quality is currently being evaluated.





GOAL 4: LEADERSHIP SUCCESSION

Implement a process that will document EASTERN's existing culture, and sustain and enrich that culture in a rapidly changing environment with particular emphasis on the role of EASTERN's formal and informal leadership in the process.

The team described culture in this plan the way anthropologists use the term; that is, it includes ideas, beliefs, values processes, actions, rules and rituals. To be useful, the description of EASTERN's culture must be simple. Effective transmission of an organization's culture must involve awareness of the organization's history, in particular, the development of the culture.

The four responsibilities of leaders with respect to EASTERN's culture are learning, leading, transmitting, and building. Refer to the full report for an in-depth description of these responsibilities.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS & STATUS

Major focus has been on the development of EASTERN's E-Board, which states the values and processes that make up EASTERN's culture. This has been accomplished with input from representatives of all of EASTERN's stakeholders and serves as the basis for communicating EASTERN's culture to new members of the community. The remaining activities outlined in the plan stem from this document. A number of activities that assure the transmission of EASTERN's culture have also been undertaken and the E-Board now serves as a focal point of induction/orientation of new members of EASTERN's community.

SUMMARY

The importance of having developed EASTERN's E-Board cannot be over emphasized. Assuring that its content and significance are transmitted to people new to the organization must remain an ongoing priority. The development of an oral history and the conducting of interviews with persons familiar with EASTERN's history is recommended and should be revisited to determine what specific information is desired and how it will be used to perpetuate EASTERN's culture in the future.

GOAL 5: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Implement a Professional Development Plan and an Induction Plan that will ensure the successful implementation of Strategic Plan initiatives developed for Eastern Center for Arts and Technology.

The Action Team determined that the Professional Development Plan and Induction Plan needs will be based on the action plans developed during the Strategic Planning process. They further established that staff development must:

- Be based on established student needs
- Support the growth of organizational effectiveness
- Ensure content knowledge is current
- Ensure high quality instruction
- Ensure procedures and quality practices are being used
- Ensure staff know how to use technology to its fullest
- Provide a smooth entry for new employees
- Be based on student performance data

ACCOMPLISHMENTS & STATUS

During the life of this three-year plan, training was provided for all of the eight initiatives and for most of the specific actions identified. The eight areas listed below, which are currently in the planning stage, will be carried over into the three-year plan covering September 2011 through June 2014 and should be completed during the life of the current Strategic Plan. Many of the actions listed as ongoing will also be carried over into the new three-year plan and additional activities will be added as a result of the professional development planning process.

SUMMARY

The importance of Professional Development at EASTERN will increase over the coming years as a result of projected staff turnover due to retirement. In addition to the unique culture of EASTERN which must be transmitted to new arrivals, there are also many unique processes and systems which must be taught to new staff members. The Induction Plan process needs to be continually reviewed and revised to assure that all necessary training is provided to all new staff members.

GOAL 6: TECHNOLOGY

Develop a plan of action that addresses and meets the needs of EASTERN as a leader in technology, and the requirements established by the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE).

The programs at EASTERN are highly dependent on the ability of the supporting technology to provide the processes and information that the students, faculty, and administration need to excel. The Technology Plan must support all initiatives and functions of EASTERN and the goals established in the strategic process. The plan must reflect the vision and mission of the organization. The plan should address industry best practices and the specific guidelines and questions provided by PDE.

- Ensure availability of technology to meet the needs of EASTERN's students and staff in a secure environment
- Provide appropriate technology to enhance student success
- Apply innovative technology to facilitate collaboration with EASTERN's constituents
- Improve support and service to employees

ACCOMPLISHMENTS & STATUS

During the life of this three-year plan, training was provided for all of the four initiatives and for almost all of the specific actions identified. The two areas that are currently in the planning stage are:

- Improve user familiarity and refine financial information availability to employees through technology
- Improve utilization of video conferencing capabilities through the Intermediate Unit network resources to

participating school districts, other career and technical institutions, and local businesses

These actions will be carried over into the three-year plan covering September 2011 through June 2014 and should be completed during the life of the current Strategic Plan. Many of the actions listed as ongoing will also be carried over into the new three-year Technology Plan and additional activities will be added as a result of the new Technology Plan.

SUMMARY

EASTERN continues to provide technology and services at the highest level. Training and support are ongoing for all employees. During the past three years, the technology initiatives have centered on security. EASTERN secured the building with a controlled access system at all entry points and upgraded the cameras. A Business Continuation Plan has been developed to provide for disaster recovery. Training and support of current and new technologies have been scheduled and delivered in order to maximize employee productivity. EASTERN's Data Warehouse has been upgraded to assist staff with the monitoring of the student success goals for programs and participating high schools. Data dashboards are scheduled to be installed on teacher desktops in 2012. The GroupWise email and document management systems were replaced with Outlook Exchange and OnBase during the summer of 2011.

The technology staff meets regularly with the administrative team to review service, support and timelines for meeting employee support requests. Service Level Agreements have been amended as needed to provide better user satisfaction.

EASTERN has produced new videos that promote and support the needs of student recruitment and student success. The school website has a counselor support page and a contact form for alumni to stay in touch with the school and the Foundation. EASTERN has entered the cyber world with a Facebook page that has over 500 fans.

EASTERN continues to develop web-based and collaborative technologies such as MOODLE and WIKI to promote the newest and most efficient means of learning and sharing of information.



STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

Strategic Planning is a systematic process of envisioning a desired future, and translating this vision into broadly defined goals and a sequence of steps to achieve them. Therefore, intermittent updates to the plan are vital not only to the plan, but to the organization.

Overall, the planning team concluded that EASTERN has made substantial progress in meeting the six goals and continues to use the Strategic Plan as the emphasis for all of its activities, budgeting and tactical planning. The team acknowledged that student success is, and will remain, the focal point of EASTERN's efforts. The remaining five goals are designed to support the efforts to achieve student success.

The planning team concluded that EASTERN and its stakeholders remain concerned about Leadership Succession as the organization continues to infuse and transmit the culture to new school employees and contacts.

Successful Student Recruitment remains a goal and a mission of the organization. EASTERN cannot ignore, misunderstand or underestimate the causes of recruitment

problems and lowered enrollment. The goal to find the right students for the right programs rests true today.

Business Involvement in Program Quality assures EASTERN of relevant and attractive programs for the future. The front-end Discovery Phase will provide rewarding and exciting new opportunities for the next generation of students.

Professional Development and Technology Plans provide the tools to keep staff and students with the best practices and resources to accomplish the goals. The results of this review will serve as the basis for the development of a new Strategic Plan in the fall of 2013 which will continue planning as a "way of life" for Eastern Center for Arts and Technology.



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