



Critical Consciousness, Equity & Inclusion

Blueprint for Progress

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TANGIPAHOA PARISH SCHOOL SYSTEM

Critical Consciousness, Equity & Inclusion: *Blueprint for Progress*

Introduction: A Commitment to Stakeholders

This Blueprint tells the story of how we will transform our school system into a world-class system of learning for children across this great parish. Within the pages of this document, you will learn more about our vision and Core Values, as well as the proactive approaches we can take to build a positive school culture that supports students both academically and behaviorally by implementing strategies that will build positive relationships with students and their families. Our cultural vision is that our school system operates in a more “*proactive*” way rather than reacting after the problem arises. This transformation will take a team effort with all of us working together with students and families to reach our full potential.

Historically, school districts focus on developing staff, providing a great curriculum, and preparing students to be successful on statewide tests. However, there is a much bigger picture here. We are preparing students to be very successful citizens of our great parish and state. That means we are not only preparing them to be successful in college or career, but also equipping them with the social emotional skills they need to be good neighbors and citizens in our communities. The CULTURE piece has most often never been addressed in school systems. However, research tells us that CULTURE trumps everything we do, and without a great school culture, we will never reach our academic and educational goals for students. When we improve the educational outcomes for children, we then improve the quality of our lives in the future.

The “Why” Behind this Work

Together, we have a wonderful opportunity to learn *new* evidence-based approaches to deal with student behavior. These approaches are more about prevention and proactive systems of behavior intervention, rather than the antiquated discipline models (from the 80’s) that we see in many schools and districts across the state. Our current discipline models are focused on punitive consequences and the exclusion of students from school - never really teaching students *replacement behaviors*. Also, we should not forget about our failures with alternative education and the need to redesign high quality alternative education programs that focus on building effective multi-tier systems of support utilizing evidence-based behavior interventions.

In many schools across the state, discipline goes something like this. . . . *Here are the rules. These are the consequences if you choose to break the rules, and if you don’t conform to our expectations, we will vote you off the island and send you to an alternative site (that is failing).* However, we continue to have the same repeat offenders almost every week, repeating the same behaviors.

Now, let's give ourselves credit. We have tried new approaches from the 80's. We added PBIS into the mix to reward students for their good behavior, and this works for some of the students. *Does this sound familiar?* These antiquated discipline models have been detrimental for our most at-risk students in terms of academic achievement, graduation rates, and quality of life after high school due to their multiple suspensions and exclusions from school. We can have the best high-quality curriculum, professional development, and teacher workforce, but if students are not in the classroom, they are not getting access to high quality instruction.

Most of us are obviously here because our suspension and/or expulsion rates are out the roof, which landed us on the "list" of UIR schools for discipline. If you ask any teacher or administrator, he or she will tell you that discipline is a major issue (if not the #1 problem) they face every day at their school.

If you interview for any position as an educator, you can bet you will be asked a question about student discipline. Why? Because we know we have a broken system that is not working and we are hoping someone has a better way. Yet, we keep using the same ineffective approach - over and over, year after year - expecting something different to happen, and, as Albert Einstein said, "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results."

Statistics tell us that if a student is suspended just one time, he or she is 3 times more likely to be incarcerated as an adult; yet, we continue to build more jails. Black students are 3½ times more likely to be suspended than their white peers, often for the same behavior as their classmates.

Our current discipline practices lead us to build what is known as the "school-to-prison pipeline." The students who are suspended and expelled many times make their way to prison because we are not helping them to actually change their behaviors, and they are falling more academically behind their peers.

So, I will ask the "Dr. Phil question" - *How is that working for us?*

I challenge each of you to take advantage of the wealth of information included in our *CCEI: Blueprint for Progress*. Both our district and school teams have done a wonderful job pulling together resources and supports for evidence-based behavior interventions and tiered support models.

Take advantage of this wonderful resource! Have an open mind. Be a sponge. Listen, share, ask questions, and create a more effective evidence-based way to address the discipline issues in your school and district by building a positive school culture and strong relationships.

This work matters, because culture trumps everything! We may have the best teachers, the best curriculum, and all the other supports to ensure high quality implementation, but without a strong, positive school culture and strong relationships with our students, we will never reach our potential in the Tangipahoa Parish School System.

OUR DISTRICT VISION FOR EXCELLENT SCHOOLS

Excellent schools do 5 things really well, and these are the keys to high student performance and shifting our practices to better serve our students:

1. ***Shared Purpose: Core Values and a Focus on Critical Consciousness, Equity, and Inclusion (CCEI)***
Shifting to an explicit naming of CCEI work and values -- and adults being accountable for meeting goals and exemplifying Core Values
2. ***High Quality Curriculum: Rigorous, Inclusive, and Critically Conscious***
Shifting to build educator capacity to make difficult content accessible to all students and to use technology strategically
3. ***Culture: Anti-biased, Purposeful Cultures with Strong Relationships***
Shifting to actively promoting student, family, employee, and community wellness in addition to academics
4. ***Talent: Recruit, Select, Capacity-building, and Accountability***
Shifting to ensure educators and all staff reflect the diversity of our community, exemplify CCEI, and that we attract and retain the best team
5. ***Procedures: New Processes and Partnerships Aligned to Core Values***
Shifting key processes to take a strengths-based approach to keeping students safe and learning





Priority #1 Shared Purpose: Core Values, Critical Consciousness, Equity and Inclusion (CCEI)

TPSS is shifting to an explicit naming of CCEI work and values - and adults being accountable for meeting goals and exemplifying core values.

Shared Purpose and Critical Consciousness, Equity, and Inclusion (CCEI)

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

Our number one purpose is to ensure each and every student in TPSS masters the academic, social, and emotional skills that afford them the maximum opportunities in life. This lofty goal requires all of us to be fiercely focused on best-in-class academics, including high-quality and culturally competent curricula, as well as attending to student, staff, and family well-being.

In order to attain this goal, we have to be real about where we are. We know that students of color, students with disabilities, and students who live below the poverty level are not overall performing at the same level as their peers. We know that is due, in part, to work we need to do within our district to help students overcome obstacles.

We also know we cannot deliver on these promises unless the entire district — from the bus driver who picks up your child in the morning, to the person who greets you at the front door, to the Superintendent, to Board Members, Principals, and everyone in-between — works hard every single day to become a high-performing district as identified by Louisiana's Accountability System exemplified by CCEI.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

Five years from now, TPSS aspires to be a community that promotes critical consciousness by embracing equity and inclusion. To accomplish this, we must remove existing barriers and promote honesty in examining our implicit biases that prevent us from exhibiting our Core Values.

Our definitions are as follows:

- ***Critical consciousness*** = empowering individuals (students, staff, and other stakeholders) to recognize racial and other inequities and to “be the change” they wish to see in their community.
- ***Equity*** = advancing mindsets, policies, and practices to ensure every student gets what he or she needs to reach goals, which means some students will need more to overcome societal barriers.
- ***Inclusion*** = creating environments where each person’s individual uniqueness and belief system is encouraged and where each person feels he or she is seen, heard, and valued.

All of these words are easy to say, but hard to do. We know we have work to do to take these commitments and determine how to ensure they have a tangible impact on our core district functions such as:

- Selecting core and supplemental curricula
- Continuing to reform discipline and monitor and adjust practices
- Adjusting and updating hiring practices
- Training and supporting educators and other stakeholders
- Assigning resources — budgets, bussing routes, and enrollment practices alike

We are already on our way in several of these areas, some of which are described in this document, while other goals will require a longer timeline. Today, with this blueprint, we are committing to short, medium, and long-term goals.

What You Need to Know

- Our focus has been and will remain on academic excellence for all students. In order to achieve this, we must address inequities that are preventing all students from achieving.
- For the first time, this district has named and identified this work as “*Critical Consciousness, Equity, and Inclusion (CCEI)*.”
- CCEI work will not happen overnight, but will require a sustained effort over many years.

Core Values and CCEI

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

Core Values are fundamental beliefs and aspirational norms on the behaviors embraced by TPSS. These guiding principles are the foundation of a high-performing organization. They will help us to determine how we operate and help us fulfill our mission. Our values create a shared way of doing our work and, when modeled by adults, show students how to engage with the world.

By following these explicit norms, we create a system where both students and adults create the conditions for learning. When adults and students feel psychologically, emotionally, and physically safe, they learn and grow. Our Core Values are a critical aspect to reaching our goals.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

Tangipahoa Parish School System has identified three Core Values we want every citizen of our parish to exhibit every day. **Be respectful. Be compassionate. Be great.**

Making this shift across our parish requires us to start with our almost 20,000 students who attend our public schools. For the school system to have a positive lasting impact on students knowing, understanding, and living our Core Values, it must start with our 2,800 employees first. When every single employee exhibits our Core Values every day, even under difficult situations, our Core Values become our DNA. When all our employees model these Core Values daily, our students will then follow our lead as our expectations of them rise in terms of both academics and behavior, resulting in a more positive school culture and climate. Eventually, our Core Values will become the DNA of our students and, as a result, will have a positive impact on our families and communities across this great parish. Students will go home and exhibit our values, and families will notice the change in their children. What a tremendous impact we can have on our quality of life here in Tangipahoa Parish!

The purpose of this document is to clearly define our Core Values, describe what our Core Values will look like in our schools for both employees and students, and determine the non-negotiables regarding our expectations for modeling Core Values every day.

Core Value #1: Be respectful.

What does it mean to be respectful? At its heart, being respectful means showing that you value the perspectives, time, and space of others. Respect is how you feel about someone and how you treat them. Respect is thinking and acting in a positive way about yourself or others. You are being respectful when you think and act in a way that shows others you care about their feelings and well-being, especially including those who may have very different views and beliefs than you. When you want to be respectful, try putting yourself in another person’s shoes and then, behave in a way that shows you care. Showing respect for others both face-to-face and through electronic communication will include such things as not calling people mean names, treating people with courtesy, caring enough about yourself that you don’t do things you know can hurt yourself or someone else.

What does it look like to be respectful?

Showing kindness and courtesy. Being respectful starts with a basic consideration of the feelings of others. Ask yourself how you would want to be treated in a given situation and make an effort to treat other people that way. Treat everyone you encounter - strangers on the street, coworkers, classmates, and/or family members with respect and courtesy. This approach to situations requires being in tune with one's implicit biases to prevent unwittingly treating people with whom you do not have a shared identity with less kindness than those who do.

Being polite. The concept of etiquette and good manners seems pointless when you are a kid; but when you grow up, you realize these customs function as a way to keep society running smoothly. Practicing good manners is a way to be respectful of other people's space and time. If no one bothered being polite, everyday situations like eating in a restaurant, waiting in line at the post office, or dealing with bad traffic would be completely intolerable.

Refusing to discriminate. Be respectful to everyone, not just people you know or those you perceive as having a higher status than you. Some people discriminate by showing respect for people upon whom they want to make a good impression and being rude to everyone else. There is truth in the saying, "You can judge the character of others by how they treat those who can do nothing for them or to them." Be kind to everyone, regardless of who they are, what they look like, or what their relationship is to you.

Respecting differences in belief and opinion. Be respectful to people who are different from you, even if you don't understand them very well. The differences among us are what make life interesting. Besides, you probably have more in common with people than you know. Even when you really don't see where someone else is coming from, be courteous and civil. You don't have to love everyone you meet and you certainly don't have to agree with them, but you can still show them respect. Be respectful of others, no matter their cultural, religious, or political beliefs.

Individuals who exemplify *being respectful*:

- Understand that building positive relationships with students, other employees, and parents is the basis on which everything else is built.
- Have positive supportive interactions with every student and maintain the dignity of their students and their families at all times.
- Create an atmosphere of trust, mutual respect, and kindness.
- Focus on de-escalating situations.
- Actively reflect regularly on their possible biases and are open to discuss how biases may impact day-to-day interaction even in ways that are unintentional.

Core Value #2: Be compassionate.

What does it mean to be compassionate?

Compassion and kindness are qualities that shape positive relationships between people and help create caring communities. Being compassionate and kind is closely related to empathy. Kindness is a tendency to feel concern for others, empathy refers more generally to our ability to take the perspective of another person and feel their emotions, and compassion goes one step further. Compassion includes the desire to take actions that will alleviate a person's suffering and care for the physical environment as well. Compassion literally means to suffer together. As we enhance our ability to really see and feel what is around us, our ability to experience compassion grows.

What does compassion look like?

A child demonstrates compassion and kindness when acting on feelings of concern. This might include spontaneously helping others (e.g., picking up something another child has dropped, trying to stop quarrels, saying kind things, helping a person who is sick or hurt, and/or inviting others to join in a game or activity). Students with compassion will report when they observe other students being teased or bullied at school. Researchers have demonstrated that empathy and compassion can provide a buffer against aggressive and hurtful behaviors. When children do not feel concern for others, they may engage in hurtful behaviors such as name-calling, taking things from others, hitting, pushing, or teasing. They will not spontaneously offer to help another person who is sick or hurt.

Individuals who exemplify *being compassionate*:

- Look beyond the confines of their job description and go above and beyond to assess and meet the needs of students and families;
- Can relate to others even though they may not share the same life experiences or problems;
- Are not judgmental or condescending, but supportive and understanding;
- Develop solutions to assist families in overcoming barriers that exist outside of the school building;
- Try to put themselves in the other person's shoes in order to understand their struggle, and then, take action to assist them;
- Reach out to help others when they see them struggling; and
- Are self-aware and reflective, understanding that everyone has implicit or unconscious biases that if left unexamined, can hold us back from our vision.

Core Value #3: Be great.

What does it mean to be great?

No matter what role you play in our school system, be great at it! Being great means you always give your very best. It doesn't mean you are perfect, but you strive to reach your full potential. Being great means even when you face adversity, you press on and you don't give up. Being great is not average. Being great is not just doing your job. Being great is giving it your very best effort despite the challenges you may face.

Educating students directly or indirectly is not an easy job. In fact, it is very difficult; however, the rewards are great! Knowing you had some part in helping a child be his/her BEST is the most rewarding thing we can contribute to the world we live in today.

Individuals who exemplify *being great*:

- Show up every day and exert maximum effort;
- Are accountable for their actions and meet goals on time;
- Have the ability to fight through adversity without giving up to accomplish a goal;
- Are strong in spirit, courageous, and brave - especially when it comes to confronting and overcoming inequities;
- Lift up teammates to greatness, too;
- Have the ability to make the most of what they have available to solve a problem or make it through a situation; and
- Have a growth mindset — never stop growing, learning, or tackling new things.

What You Need to Know

- For the first time, TPSS is defining its Core Values: Be respectful; Be compassionate; and Be great.
- Our Core Values will be infused in all aspects of our school system, and we expect adults to model these for our students every day.
- These Core Values are not only great attributes to have, but are fundamental to the attainment of our goal to be a healthy, high-performing organization.

Priority #2 High Quality Curriculum: Rigorous,



Inclusive, and Critically Conscious

Shifting to build educator capacity to make difficult content accessible to all students and to use technology strategically

Core Curriculum and Instruction

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

Curricula and supplemental materials that are culturally-competent and reflect the racial, ethnic, socio-economic, gender, and diversity of students promote inclusivity and increase academic success for all children.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

Tangipahoa Parish School System is committed to providing our teachers and students with high quality curricular materials that assess each student’s proficiency against rigorous standards that are unbiased, accessible to all students, and support our students in understanding the perspectives and cultures of others. Our commitment extends to providing teachers with high quality professional development, resources, and materials to support implementation.

To reach this goal we have:

- Incorporated **complex and diverse texts** that support the state shift of being inclusive and advancing the Louisiana State Standards into the core curriculum across all grade levels and content areas.
- Utilized **collaboration** as a best practice in our district to support the implementation of curriculum and strengthen instruction.
 - Each school, through the planning and data analysis of their Instructional Leadership Teams, is required to hold weekly collaboration time for teachers by grade level and/or content area to strengthen and deepen teacher knowledge of the standards. Teachers are expected to analyze student work from all student groups and share findings to support one another in refining instructional practices.
 - The protocols for collaboration time are reinforced through monthly collaborative Principal Cadre Meetings.

What You Need To Know

- TPSS is implementing high quality curricular materials that assess each student’s proficiency using methods that are unbiased, include complex and diverse texts that are accessible to all students, and support our students in understanding the perspectives and cultures of others.
- Weekly collaboration meetings for teachers and principals support the implementation of curriculum and strengthen instruction.

Technology

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint:

The traditional education model of attending a school building every day may not always be the most viable option for all students. Students who are out of school for short or long periods of time due to health issues, family situations, disciplinary actions, or other reasons often fall behind their classmates and require a more flexible learning environment to maintain academic progress.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

Tangipahoa Parish School System has implemented a 1:1 device program for all students PreK-12 to ensure students have access to academic materials when outside of a traditional education model. In order to close instructional gaps that occur due to short and/or long-term absences, TPSS offers virtual courses as an alternative to attending school traditionally. This suite of high-quality virtual content for our core subjects in PreK-8, as well as the high school LEAP 2025 subjects, follows the same pacing guide in order for students to transition as needed between the traditional and virtual models.

What You Need to Know

- This shift in learning models and having 1:1 devices will allow our district to reach our goal of closing the instructional gaps that occur when students are absent due to illness or behavior, and assist our students in being prepared for their future college and career endeavors.

School Assistance Teams (SAT)

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint:

High performing schools have the capacity to deliver differentiated supports for students. They have trained their teachers and principals how to identify students in need of deeper support and how to report if a student or family needs support beyond the capacity of the school.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

In the past, Tangipahoa Parish School System only referred students to intensive supports once students were severely behind academically. These types of supports were not tailored for general instruction, nor for students who were starting to fall behind, nor for students struggling behaviorally. Our focus now is to use differentiated systems that provide support to all students and act as an early intervention strategy to identify students before they require intensive interventions.

TPSS offers differentiated support and interventions to all students through this model.

- **General Instruction:** The expectation in TPSS is that ALL students, including virtual and alternatively placed students, will be exposed to grade level appropriate Tier I curriculum. School support personnel and teachers will provide scaffolds and assistance to all students utilizing the intervention practices and supplemental programs adopted and approved by the district.
- **Time to Accelerate:** “Accelerate” is a pre-teaching strategy to provide just-in-time support for all students during an ELA or Math unit rather than the previous method of remediating skills after a lesson has occurred. “Accelerate” is designed to effectively address and prevent unfinished learning. All students are provided extra time to learn through equal access support. Students who are not adequately progressing in the curriculum or those the teacher has identified as needing “front loading” will be scheduled for intervention time with a teacher. Students who are progressing adequately will be placed in an enrichment class to further reinforce and strengthen skills. Our schools already have time built into the school day for interventions; therefore, these lessons will fit nicely into this time slot.
- **Student Assistance Teams (SAT):** Students who continue to struggle after whole group Tier I and “Accelerate” interventions will be referred to the Student Assistance Team (SAT) for specialized plans and deeper interventions that may include accommodations to further support student growth. The standing members of the SAT consist of at least the principal/designee, the SAT Chairperson, and the classroom teacher. The parent/guardian of the student is invited to SAT meetings. This team will meet to review and analyze all relevant student data (academic, behavioral, attendance, grades, benchmark assessments, standardized test scores, etc.), and determine options available to meet the needs of the student and track student progress until the student is on grade level or is referred to the Pupil Appraisal Team after all interventions have been exhausted. Teachers and parents may request a SAT meeting for the student.

What You Need to Know

- TPSS utilizes a team approach to provide differentiated instructional and behavioral support and interventions at increasing levels of intensity to assist all students, including those who are struggling to learn, have challenging behaviors, and/or communication difficulties to ensure all are making progress toward grade level proficiency.
- TPSS created Student Assistance Teams (SAT) for students not adequately progressing in general instruction and the “Accelerate” program. This team develops specialized plans and deeper interventions that may include accommodations to further support student growth. These teams look holistically at each student to ensure he or she is thriving.

Priority #3 Culture: Anti-biased, Purposeful



Cultures with Strong Relationships

Shifting to actively promoting student, family, employee, and community wellness in addition to academics

Principals Are Leaders of Culture

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

One of the most important roles in a school system is that of the school-level Principal. Parents entrust their students to the school each day, and that trust includes such things as the academic, emotional, and physical well-being of their child. Leaders in TPSS will consistently implement and monitor systems that ensure ALL students have equitable access to a safe environment, effective teachers, academic support, social support, and educational opportunities.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

TPSS Leaders are expected to establish data-driven goals and action plans through engagement with all stakeholders to ensure a safe, secure, and academically challenging learning environment for ALL our students. Our leaders seek the best interests and needs of ALL students by establishing high expectations and creating opportunities that empower students and parents from all communities to have a voice.

TPSS selected the NIET rubric for Principals because it matched our vision of the attributes of an effective Principal and helps guide them - not only to be the academic leader of the school, but the cultural leader as well. Most importantly, we believe that a fundamental prerequisite for learning is the need to create safe, positive environments that reduce the need for using negative behaviors to solve problems.

Our Core Values drive how we recruit, select, evaluate, coach, and hold accountable our Principals.

- **Recruiting and Selecting** – We have shifted our recruiting and selection criteria to explicitly align with the NIET framework and intentionally seek out leaders who embody our Core Values.
- **Development** - To excel in all aspects of being a leader, Principals need to internalize the NIET rubric in order to bring those competencies into every classroom and into the relationships he or she builds with school staff and students. We are investing in professional development training, coaching supports, and mid-year reviews to assist Principals to integrate these competencies into how they approach all aspects of the school environment.
- **Accountability** – We use the NIET rubric as a transparent, open, fair, and objective tool to maintain standards of practice and also to help Principals improve their practice. Principals who struggle to perform their duties will receive intensive interventions to improve their practice. Principals are recommended for rehiring when they make adequate progress on all aspects of the NIET rubric.

What You Need to Know

- Principals are the academic and cultural leaders of the school. Principals are responsible for creating safe positive environments that reduce the need for using negative behaviors to solve problems.
- TPSS adopted the NIET rubric for Principal development and is investing in professional development training, coaching supports, and mid-year reviews to assist Principals to integrate the NIET competencies into how they approach all aspects of the school environment.
- Principals are held accountable to all aspects of the school environment and are recommended for rehiring when they make adequate progress on all aspects of the NIET rubric.

Teaching Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Skills

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

In Tangipahoa Parish, we are committed to our faculty and staff exhibiting a skillset to promote timeless values and concepts that transcend social and cultural differences in an effort to build and maintain a positive culture and climate to ensure academic achievement for all students.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

To achieve this vision, we will build capacity in our leaders, teachers, paraprofessionals, and other faculty and staff members to model inward values that:

- influence positive outward actions with students;
- de-escalate incidents; and
- increase positive interactions between adults and students as well as students and students.

This vision requires SEL to be embedded seamlessly in the school day to ensure all adults in our schools focus on equipping students with personal success factors. These factors are fundamental to learning and are the skills students must embrace and exhibit to be productive and successful in our communities and throughout the world.

- **Curriculum:** We selected the “Character First” curriculum which embodies lessons focused on personal success factors that promote positive school culture and climate, and aligns with our Core Values. This program has a simple, straightforward approach which allows important school culture work to happen simultaneously with our Tier 1 academic curricula without an overhaul. We expect all schools to follow the “Character First” program, yet we realize it is not yet fully aligned to our culturally inclusive, anti-biased, anti-racist approach to learning. We will be augmenting and annotating this program over time to increase its alignment with TPSS’s specific approach.

- **Integration** - The most successful schools will embed the “Character First” principles into all that they do, using it as the foundation for their school culture. Every interaction between adults and students, as well as between students and students, should reflect these principles. Schools should adopt the language of the program and reinforce that language in all communications to school staff, students, and families; for example, in the newsletters, morning announcements, and school programming. Successful schools will integrate these concepts into classroom lessons and every content area, as well as into the delivery of student support services, including counseling and behavior management practices.
- **Learning** - The SEL model will foster the “Tangi Effect” in which leaders shift their mindsets and transform the cultures of their buildings to impact teacher-to-student and student-to-student relationships. The “Character First” curriculum will take time for school staff to learn the fundamentals, and time to understand how to best integrate into the school culture. TPSS is dedicated to providing Principals with professional development in an effort to support schools with development and implementation of a schoolwide plan. Various Central Office teams will also provide site-based observations bi-monthly to provide feedback and support in the implementation of SEL in the day-to-day operation of the school, and to help develop a “Next Steps Plan” with the school’s implementation team.

What You Need to Know

- Social Emotional Learning is just as important as a high-quality Tier 1 Curriculum, and must be part of the school day for students.
- Social Emotional Learning impacts school culture, and school culture is key to academic excellence.
- We cannot reach our full potential as a school district if we do not address and improve our school culture as well as social emotional learning.

Positive Strategies for Intervention

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

To promote an anti-racist, anti-biased, purposeful school culture with strong relationships, we believe in using positive strategies to prevent incidents. Every reasonable effort must be made to correct student behavior through counseling and other school-based interventions such as restorative practices. Appropriate disciplinary responses will emphasize prevention and effective intervention, foster resiliency, prevent disruption to students’ education, and promote a positive school culture.

Ninety percent of student behavior incidents and misconduct can be prevented by the use of positive strategies that include a range of progressive, age-appropriate interventions and supports, and disciplinary responses. Through the use of a range of intervention and prevention strategies that engage students and give them a sense of purpose, school staff members facilitate students’ academic and social-emotional growth and assist them in following school rules and policies. This can reduce suspensions and expulsions.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

Each school is expected to promote a positive school culture and climate that provides students with a supportive environment in which to grow both socially and academically. Schools are expected to take a proactive role in nurturing students’ pro-social behavior by providing them with a range of positive behavior supports, as well as meaningful opportunities for social-emotional learning. School staff members are responsible for addressing inappropriate student behaviors that disrupt learning. Administrators, teachers, counselors, and other school staff are expected to: 1) engage all students in intervention and prevention strategies that address behavioral issues; and 2) discuss these strategies with the student and his or her family.

In the classroom, teachers are trained to use a variety of academic and behavioral techniques, interventions, and approaches to achieve an optimal learning environment, and to support students academically, socially and emotionally. Interdisciplinary teams that include support staff (such as guidance counselors) are a part of every school. These teams meet on a regular basis to devise and implement strategies to address specific issues encountered by “at-risk” students. When a teacher recognizes an individual student is struggling to learn the standard curriculum or having difficulty maintaining appropriate behavior in the classroom, the student is referred to the Student Assistance Team (SAT). The SAT is a group made up of the student’s school administrator, a current teacher, and other appropriate professional staff (such as the school counselor, social worker, or speech pathologist) who meet to identify root causes, solve problems, and find highly effective interventions to meet the student’s needs. SAT meetings for those students who need additional support are held more frequently. Continuous family communication is vital in order for all parties to stay abreast of the intervention plan and the student’s progress.

TPSS is committed to a comprehensive, proactive, research- based approach to foster the wellbeing of all students by utilizing the following strategies:

- Parent/Family Outreach
- Student Assistance Team (SAT)
- Counseling
- Social Skills Coaching
- Mentoring
- Conflict Resolution
- Restorative Practices
- Community-based Organizations
- Data Review
- Social Emotional Learning

What You Need to Know

- 90% of student behavior incidents and misconduct can be prevented by the use of positive strategies that include a range of progressive, age-appropriate interventions and supports, and disciplinary responses.
- Through the use of a range of intervention and prevention strategies that engage students and give them a sense of purpose, school staff members facilitate students’ academic and social-emotional growth and assist them in following school rules and policies. This can reduce suspensions and expulsions.

Using Student Assistance Teams (SAT) Before Crisis, To Refer, and To Discuss

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

The Student Assistance Team (SAT) is a general education, data-driven, problem-solving committee made up of the school Principal/designee, classroom teacher, and other staff who know the student. The purpose of the SAT is to provide evidence-based interventions for each student experiencing difficulties with academic performance, social emotional functioning, behavioral issues, etc., so that the students may remain in the regular education setting. Early interventions prevent over-identification of students in need of special education.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

Tangipahoa Parish School System believes that the SAT plays a very important role in providing early identification of struggling students and developing a student support plan that includes targeted interventions and progress monitoring conducted with fidelity for all struggling students, not just students with disabilities. TPSS believes that the perspective and input of many adults helps create specific interventions. Students are referred to the SAT by teachers, administrators, other school personnel, and parents/families. The SAT approach allows students to thrive in a regular education setting on a school campus that strives to create a positive school culture, embraces diversity, and promotes inclusion.

Student Services provides ongoing professional development of scenario-based training for school staff who work with students through academic and behavioral struggles on a daily basis. These training sessions focus on consistency, mindset, proper investigation and documentation, and making rational committee decisions. Student Services uses real time scenarios that are unique to the climate and culture of the TPSS and aligned with our Core Values. Further, the Pupil Appraisal Team is available to support schools in the development of any student intervention plan.

What You Need to Know

- SAT is a general education, data driven, problem-solving committee that plays a very important role in providing early identification of struggling students and developing a student support plan that includes targeted interventions and progress monitoring conducted with fidelity for all struggling students - not only for students with disabilities.
- TPSS provides SAT training and support for school staff to assist them in identifying issues and planning interventions.

Inclusion for Students with Disabilities

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

Students with disabilities should be provided equitable access to rigorous instruction through an inclusive learning experience. An inclusive environment where students with disabilities are educated alongside students without disabilities maximizes the degree to which students with disabilities receive a high-quality education. When students with disabilities are segregated, they are often taught a less challenging curriculum that does not prepare them to succeed in school and life.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

- At TPSS, we strive to eliminate the things that separate our students with disabilities from the general student population. The following changes have been made:
 - All teachers, including special education teachers, attend Tier 1 curriculum training, so that all students, including students with disabilities, receive instruction from teachers well-versed in the Core Curriculum.
 - All teachers, not just special education teachers, attend professional development designed to orient teachers to the fundamental shifts of supporting diverse learners. These sessions focus on how to support diverse learners through small group instruction, making responsible modifications to meet specific student needs, and understanding foundational research and theory related to instruction for students of all abilities from racially, ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds.
 - All classes are inclusion classes. All students, including students with disabilities, must be exposed to Tier 1 Curriculum. Students with IEPs may not be pulled out for services during Core instruction lessons. Special education teachers and paraprofessionals may support students with disabilities during Core instruction time to provide necessary services. Pull-outs may only happen during non-Core instruction time.

What You Need to Know

- All classes are inclusion classes. All students, including students with disabilities, must be exposed to Tier 1 Curriculum.
- All teachers, including special education teachers, attend Tier 1 Curriculum training, so that all students, including students with disabilities, receive instruction from teachers well-versed in the Core Curriculum.

Using Counseling and Mental Health Professionals for Support for Students

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

The mental health needs of young people are ever-increasing. The CDC reports 1 in 6 United States children aged 2–8 years (17.4%) have a diagnosed mental, behavioral, or developmental disorder. We believe that early and appropriate access to evidence-based counseling services is essential to preventing potential negative outcomes such as suspension from school, academic difficulties/retention, alternative school placement, hospitalization, and school dropout.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

Students have far more needs than academic support only. TPSS believes that the school counselor’s role has evolved to become a central and important part of a child’s social and emotional development and educational career. The counselor’s role has shifted from focusing exclusively on college applications to becoming a key member of the school team, working collaboratively with students, school administration, parents, and guardians to provide evidence-based, data-driven supports.

As TPSS makes significant shifts in its expectations around school climate, cultural sensitivity, relationships and prevention-based measures, we believe that school counselors are pivotal to our overall success. We believe that all students deserve reliable, daily access to a professional and knowledgeable school counselor. We also acknowledge that limited or poor access has a greater impact on students of color, students of lower socioeconomic status, LGBTQ+ students, and students in rural communities - all of which are factors in Tangipahoa Parish.

TPSS currently has two distinct counseling groups: 1) school counselors assigned to the 25 district elementary/middle schools to provide preventive school guidance lessons; and 2) mental health counselors who provide individual and group counseling services. We have increased our efforts to provide evidence-based practices and standardize our referral and reporting systems, and created an evidence-based assessment tool for suicide and threat assessments. We have high school counselors who assist students with scheduling, career exploration and college applications, and also provide them with social and emotional supports. Additionally, we have added valuable interventions such as Restorative Justice, Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS), Suicide and Threat Assessments, and Trauma Informed Care.

Through partnerships with RKM Primary Care and Southeast Community Health Systems, all students with diagnosed mental health disorders, regardless of insurance or ability to pay, can be referred for high quality mental health services delivered during the school day. These partnerships address many barriers to accessing mental health treatment for our families including cost, lack of insurance, lack of transportation, and availability of local services.

With the significant increase of school counselors and access to mental health professionals, TPSS has experienced reductions in disciplinary incidents, out of school suspensions, expulsions, and truancy. We feel there continues to be a need for preventative, whole school social and emotional intervention and would like to embed a full-time school counselor into the team at each school in the parish.

We believe that providing a full-time staff member dedicated to the mental, emotional, and social well-being of students on a full-time, daily basis will assist with many existing obstacles such as:

- Integrating a social emotional learning curriculum across all grade levels;
- Providing support to administrative teams managing a crisis (e.g., suicidal student, threat assessments, court/legal/custody concerns, and/or child protection reporting);
- Engaging counselors in the Student Assistance Team process to provide evidence-based interventions for students struggling behaviorally; and
- Providing training to school staff in the areas of childhood disorders, effective classroom interventions, grief/loss/trauma, restorative practices, and other relevant topics.

What You Need to Know

- TPSS believes that the school counselor's role has evolved to become a central and important part of a child's social and emotional development and educational career. The counselor's role has shifted from focusing on college applications to becoming a key member of the school team, working collaboratively with students, school administration, parents, and guardians.
- TPSS believes that school counseling should be evidence-based and data-driven.
- TPSS believes that school counselors are pivotal to making significant shifts in its expectations around school climate, cultural sensitivity, relationships, and prevention-based measures.

Community Circles - A Restorative Practice

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

Restorative Practices are a cultural shift in thinking and response. It's shifting away from thinking about: 1) the infraction or violation; 2) who committed the violation; and 3) the punishment to be rendered because of the violation, to thinking about: 1) the harm that was done or rule that was violated, or whether there was a dispute, disagreement, or conflict; and 2) how to address the incident to repair the harm and meet the needs so that relationships and communities may be repaired and restored.

Where Things Are Now What We Are Changing (The "Shifts")

At TPSS, restorative practices start with the initial school climate of engaging and building relationships throughout the school. "Community Circles", a circle discussion on various topics, may be used to help create an environment of trust where the teacher and student may dialogue about their cares, concerns, and crises. During this time, the victim and offender, along with witnesses and a facilitator, will have a respectful discussion in a manner that will allow them to achieve results and a resolution. "Community Circles" give students an opportunity and environment where they may express their emotions and feel accepted, helping them flourish academically, socially, and emotionally. When faculty and staff recognize the needs and obligations of students, understanding the impact of the harm caused to the victim and offender leads to a school climate of unity and respect. In turn, this reinforces positive relationships that are essential to a strong community and school climate.

Each principal, assistant principal, disciplinarian, and counselor should learn and practice the conflict resolution component of mediating and asking the victim, offender, and any necessary witnesses about the incident. All teachers should implement the concept of "Community Circles" in some manner. This may be implemented as an extension to the lesson or an opportunity to create an initial contact/discussion with the group, i.e., morning or afternoon discussion prior to starting class, and may be done on a daily or weekly basis.

What You Need to Know

- Each principal, assistant principal, disciplinarian, and counselor should learn and practice the conflict resolution component of mediating and asking the victim, offender, and any necessary witnesses about the incident.
- All teachers should implement the concept of "Community Circles" in some manner.

Valuing Student and Teacher Input as a Measure of School Quality

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

TPSS wants to understand, directly from students and teachers, how they feel about their own social-emotional learning competencies and support them in their growth. We want to empower district/school leaders with data so they may take action to support students and teachers in building relationships.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

We selected “Panorama” as our survey and data collection partner because of the focus on school culture, alignment to the NIET rubric, and because it allows us to gather information at the district, school, classroom, and individual student level from all stakeholders. By asking students and teachers to reflect on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) through online surveys, the district and school can gather actionable data to prioritize support for students and teachers.

This year is a “learning year” for all of us, and serves as a baseline for the district and our schools. It is important that we have broad participation from teachers and students so we may get a full picture of how schools are serving these stakeholders, and so that we fully understand the data before making major changes to school implementation plans.

The District Well-Being Team decided to focus our Spring 2021 survey on student and staff well-being and school culture and will assess the following elements:

- Student Supports, Environment and Well-Being Topics:
 - Teacher-Student Relationships
 - Sense of Belonging
 - Engagement
 - Cultural Awareness and Action
 - Supportive Relationships
 - School Climate

- Teacher/Staff Well-Being and Adult SEL Topics:
 - Belonging
 - Cultural Awareness and Action
 - School Climate
 - Well-being
 - School Leadership
 - Staff-Leadership Relationships
 - Teacher Self-Reflection

In Fall 2021, we plan to survey student and teacher perception with questions focusing more on individual student needs, and will assess student skills and competencies. Topics may include:

- Student Skills and Competencies:
 - Growth Mindset
 - Self-Efficacy
 - Social Awareness

Once each survey is complete, the district will develop a district-wide plan to utilize the data. We will provide guidance to empower our Principals in developing school-level plans collaboratively to support the needs of the students and teachers as well as ensuring the school environment is safe, supportive, and equitable.

What You Need to Know

- This year is a learning year for all of us, and is a time dedicated to fully understanding how to use the data before making major changes to school implementation plans.
- The Spring 2021 survey will focus on student and staff well-being and school culture, and the Fall 2021 survey will focus on individual student needs.

A Shift in Our Alternative Education (AE) Program to an Intentional Retention Strategy

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

Tangipahoa Parish School System's Alternative Education Program has been transformed from reactive approaches in regards to addressing student behavior to more comprehensive, proactive measures that provide opportunities and support for students who are experiencing challenges in the traditional classroom environment whether due to behavior challenges, juvenile detention, or being at risk for dropping out due to age. Each student's circumstances and challenges may differ; therefore, each student is provided an individualized intervention plan that focuses on his or her social and emotional competencies, behavior issues, and academic abilities.

Data shows that there is a disproportionate number of suspensions and expulsions which directly impact African American males and students with disabilities. This reality becomes the "school-to-prison pipeline" for minority students. African American students are 3.5 times more likely to be suspended or expelled from school according to a nationwide study by the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. As such, alternative education is an essential tool to ensure that students who are outside of a traditional school setting are able to return to their school campuses, continue their education, and eventually transition into a college or career of their choice.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The "Shifts")

Historically at TPSS, students who were repeatedly written up for small infractions could end up at the alternative school by "racking up points". The alternative school program is intended to support students who have committed very serious infractions, not those whose behavioral challenges could be addressed through interventions at a traditional school. Once students arrived at the alternative school, the mindset was to keep them there for the duration of the school year with little or no support to address the underlying behavioral issues that led to the student entering the alternative program. At the start of the new school year, students were allowed to return to the traditional school, but no effort was made to support their reintegration. As a result, students continued to have behavioral issues and were sent back to the alternative program. These severe, repeat behaviors often led to expulsion from the district.

TPSS has shifted its approach to alternative education and no longer views this program as a destination, but rather a tool that supports students in addressing behavior challenges and re-entering traditional school. After receiving support, students are expected to be able to return to their traditional school within 45 days, unless there is a state mandate for alternative schooling for a student. Expulsions are no longer a TPSS practice, as no student will be dropped from the district. All students who are not able to attend traditional school, either due to behavioral issues, juvenile detention, or who are at risk of dropping out, will have support at the alternative school.

Alternative education has significantly expanded its interventions and supports to meet the needs of all students who are not able to attend a traditional school environment. We have added these programs to support these students:

- **Mentoring Program** - Children who possess various risk factors that cause them to be more likely to fall victim to the school-to-prison-pipeline are identified and provided a Social and Emotional Learning Interventionist as a mentor.
 - Mentors serve as advocates for students in TPSS. Weekly, thirty-minute sessions with the mentor and student focus on the Core Values of respect, compassion, and greatness.
 - Students are identified within TPSS to receive mentoring services via administrative and parental requests.
- **Community Service**
 - Students participate in community service opportunities that expose them to networking with local community leaders and businesses.
 - Students have opportunities to give back to local communities and create positive relationships between students and community members.
- **Restorative Sessions**
 - Students and school staff participate in sessions that include having a dialogue centered on problem-solving strategies and restoration of relationships prior to the student returning to their campus.

- **Social Emotional Learning**
 - o Social emotional learning (SEL) is implemented through a lesson structure. Areas of focus include the following competencies: self-awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, relationship skills, and social awareness.
- **Creating Lasting Family Connections Program** - Families are a vital part of the intervention process for students.
 - o These sessions take place in a peer group setting. This curriculum focuses on strengthening family and community bonds and relationships through these skills areas:
 - Family sessions – parents’ role, effective expectations of our children, developing effective consequences for children; and
 - Student sessions - personal and family responsibility, giving and receiving feedback constructively, and self-expectations.
- **Office of Juvenile Justice (OJJ) Transition Liaison** - The Tangipahoa Parish School System desires to take advantage of every opportunity to support children and families in need. Students who are placed in secure placement for making poor choices in the community can benefit from a variety of programs offered.
 - o The OJJ Transition Liaison has been established not only to ensure children who report to school from secure placement successfully transition back to regular campus environments, but also to offer various program support to children and families such as Creating Lasting Families Connections and Mentoring programs. The OJJ transition liaison:
 - Collaborates with the Juvenile Court System to determine effective approaches to assist with student transitions back to regular school settings (i.e. develops a plan for making transitioning to alternative site for supports necessary to support regular campus success a norm for students assigned to OJJ);
 - Coordinates student transition plans from Detention Center to regular campus; and
 - Progress monitors and supports students as they adjust to a regular campus environment.

In addition to our interventions and supports, we have expanded our academic support programs to better meet the needs of our students.

- **Virtual Option** - With the understanding that some students may not be able to physically attend school due to health or social/emotional reasons, the Full Virtual Model is an option for students and families. In addition, this Model is an option for any TPSS student who is self-motivated and able to work independently.
 - o Full virtual students will work at home under the guidance of a teacher and are only required to visit the school for special circumstances such as testing or credentials for graduation. There will be opportunities for high school students to work towards earning additional Carnegie credits by completing available electives to be an early graduate.
 - o There will also be opportunities for connecting with peers and instructors through online platforms to ensure the rigor and standard fulfillment for speaking and listening and provide opportunities for student-to-student interaction.
 - o Schools will monitor student progress and convene a parent meeting if the student is not showing adequate growth in this model. Students in the Full Virtual Learning Model will be able to participate in extracurricular activities at the school where they are enrolled for the school year.
- **Dropout Prevention/ HiSet Preparation/ Workforce Development** - Considering 14.8% of high school dropouts are unemployed, students who are deemed high risk for potentially dropping out of high school are offered an opportunity to earn equivalency diplomas as well as credentials necessary to be productive citizens in today’s workforce.
 - Students are provided instruction focused on earning a passing score on HiSet.
 - In addition, the Alternative Education Program will partner with the Tangipahoa Parish Government Workforce Development Department to ensure students receive the necessary guidance and support upon earning a diploma to either obtain employment (preferably in an area of credential(s), attend college, and/or join the military.

What You Need to Know

- Alternative Education supports and interventions have been expanded and personalized to provide opportunities and support for all students who are experiencing challenges in the traditional classroom environment regardless if due to behavior challenges or educational pathway.

Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) is an Integrated, Proactive Approach

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS) is a proactive approach to establishing the behavioral supports and social culture needed for all students to achieve social, emotional, and academic success. Schools that proactively define, teach, and support appropriate student behaviors create safe, positive school environments.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

TPSS believes we can effectively teach (and reteach) appropriate behavior to all children by intervening early before problematic behaviors escalate, and when interventions are more successful. Using a multi-tiered model, we are able to match behavioral resources with student needs.

In the past, PBIS was closely associated with sanctions and a reward system of tickets, prizes, stores, etc., and viewed as a separate plan schools were required to write. We no longer see PBIS that way. Instead, we recognize that PBIS is a whole school “Response to Intervention” for behavior mindset.

PBIS is not a separate initiative, and we have made significant strides to incorporate these strategies into our SAT Team process as well as embed these practices in our leader and teacher professional development training and evaluation tools. PBIS is the umbrella under which all of the multi-tiered behavioral and emotional supports outlined in this Blueprint fall. These supports are evidence-based, tailored to the needs of each student, and work in concert with each other to support students in their social, emotional, and academic growth.

What You Need to Know

- PBIS is a whole school “Response to Intervention” for behavior mindset and should be integrated into the school culture. The core PBIS components (team based, proactive/preventative, data driven) must be integrated into all conversations around student behavior and effective behavior intervention, including SAT Teams.
- We no longer see PBIS as a separate program about sanctions and rewards.

Priority #4 Talent: Recruit, Select, Capacity-Building and



Accountability

Shifting to ensure educators and all staff reflect the diversity of our community, exemplify CCEI, and that we attract and retain the best team

Recruiting and Selecting Teachers

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

Our people are our most significant resource. To recruit, select, train and evaluate high caliber professionals across the district requires a systemic approach that infuses our Core Values and prioritizes our students' needs. Research shows that students benefit from lessons where their cultures and perspectives are encouraged and from having teachers who share their race and gender.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The "Shifts")

To better mirror the makeup of its classrooms, TPSS is expanding recruitment sourcing, realigning the selection process, and investing in a robust portfolio of teacher preparation options that provide multiple pathways into the classroom.

- To attract a diverse array of teachers, TPSS has deepened its recruiting efforts to historical Black college and technical college campuses.
- We have changed our selection practices and trained our recruiters to focus more heavily on a candidate's experience with similar school populations and alignment to our Core Values in order to better assess their potential for success at TPSS.
- We have created "Teach Tangi", a robust alternative certification program, and a new teacher orientation that prepares new teachers in our Core Values, our approach to educating our students, and our discipline procedures and expectations in order to give them the best opportunity to be successful.
- We are encouraging and investing in our paraprofessionals to give them a pathway to becoming a teacher.

What You Need to Know

- To better mirror the makeup of its classrooms, TPSS is expanding recruitment sourcing, realigning the selection process, and investing in a robust portfolio of teacher preparation options that provide multiple pathways into the classroom.

Capacity Building

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

Capacity building efforts that are sensitive to the particularities of local culture and context, lead to more inclusive and equitable approaches which fosters personal connections to the community and students. High quality, rigorous training, coaching, and feedback based on Core Values, empowers teachers to build trusting relationships, respectfully redirect students, individualize their teaching approach, and implement restorative practices for behavior modification.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

In addition to our new teacher orientation and ongoing professional development at the school and district level, TPSS is investing in layers of support for teachers, Principals, and all employees.

- **New teachers** are provided with mentors who check-in on their acclimation to TPSS and support their individual development. In addition, monthly curriculum facilitators expand on topics covered during the summer orientation.
- **All Teachers** have access to an increased number and variety of optional professional development opportunities.
- **Assistant Principals** are supported through monthly capacity building trainings that highlight how to use the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET) rubric to support classroom environment and ensure the high-quality Tier I Curriculum is being utilized properly.
- **All Principals** receive an outside coach to supplement the support from their supervisor.
- **All Employees** - Advisory committees and periodic surveys allow staff to provide feedback to district teams on how the Central Office can better meet staff needs. All employees, regardless of their current position, have a pathway for advancement.

What You Need to Know

- TPSS has invested in new individual and group professional development opportunities for teachers, principals, and all employees.

Evaluation

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

Highly effective schools have highly effective teachers and leaders who are evaluated on rubrics that support growth in all aspects of the learning environment that directly impact student achievement.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

Previously, the Tangipahoa Parish School System’s Principal rubric was very limited and focused primarily on operational items more so than instructional leadership, school culture, cultural responsiveness, and discipline. Starting in the 2020-21 school year, we adopted the NIET rubric for evaluating Assistant Principals and Principals. We selected this rubric because it directly aligns to our Core Values and holds us accountable for hiring, developing, and retaining leaders who fit all aspects of what is necessary to lead our schools including:

- School mission, vision, and strategic goal setting;
- Instructional leadership;
- Capacity building;
- School environment/community and campus climate;
- Ethics and integrity; and
- School operations/management.

Our initial pilot showed us that this rubric directly supports principals in improving student achievement, supporting teachers, and ensuring equitable learning in a supportive, culturally responsive learning environment. The NIET Principal rubric works in conjunction with the NIET Teacher rubric and reinforces its utility by making teacher effectiveness data a core component of Principal and Assistant Principal evaluations.

We have invested heavily in training and annual certification for Assistant Principals who evaluate teachers, and Principal Supervisors who evaluate Principals and Assistant Principals to ensure evaluators are well-versed in the rubric, and to ensure that we are consistently and fairly evaluating our school staff throughout the district.

What You Need to Know

- TPSS adopted the NIET Principal Rubric which aligns to our Core Values, works in conjunction with our Teacher NIET rubric, which holds our leaders accountable to improving student achievement, supporting teachers, and ensuring equitable learning in a supportive, culturally responsive, learning environment.
- TPSS is in the process of developing a Strategic Plan that will add revisions to the “Talent” section of this Blueprint for Progress. This section will be updated in Summer 2021.



Priority #5 Procedures: New Processes and Partnerships Aligned to Core Values

Shifting key processes to take a strengths-based approach to keeping students learning and safe.

A New Way of Handling Suspension

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

School suspensions decrease learning time and increase disengagement in school. Repeated and escalating suspensions can lead to expulsion or students dropping out - a direct link to juvenile detention and adult incarceration, which leads to lifelong discrimination in housing, employment, and health care. Practices that emphasize restorative rather than punitive approaches help students in school, reduce the likelihood of repeat and escalating events, and are the quickest way to reduce the school-to-prison pipeline.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

Tangipahoa Parish School System’s In-School Suspension (ISS) Program is centered around what will ultimately benefit the student and the school community. It prioritizes helping students change their behaviors and ensures access to learning during the suspension time so they do not fall further behind their peers academically. TPSS discipline practices have disproportionately impacted students of color, and this process actively places checks and balances to create equity and fairness for all students.

Each school shall establish a School-Wide Positive Behavior Support Team with representatives across all disciplines on campus. This team will establish positive school-wide expectations, routines, and procedures and determine a plan to teach those to all students, as well as collectively manage the approach to discipline. Having more school professionals involved in the process will assist in creating checks and balances within the system, create fairness, and keep students learning.

The In-School Suspension framework leverages the social emotional learning (SEL) curriculum and offers a list of different restorative practices and approaches that school leaders may use to facilitate de-escalation of behaviors that lead to incidents and promote learning. Through these practices, our goal is to keep students in a school setting where they can continue to learn and to reduce the number and severity of incidents that ultimately lead to an Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) that should not be viewed as a first step, but a last resort.

Major incidents or repeat minor infractions may result in OSS or an expulsion depending upon the severity of the issue; however, the OSS and Alternative Education Program incorporates restorative practices and continuous learning opportunities for these students so that they do not drop out of school.

This approach toward discipline is inclusive of families, getting them involved early and keeping them informed of minor and major incidents that may result in an ISS or OSS. Families must have an understanding of what behaviors warrant out-of-class discipline, and are partners in a student’s effort to reflect and learn from incidents.

Student Services will provide both required and optional professional development to school administrators and classroom teachers on how best to approach restorative practices. Additionally, Student Services and Principal Supervisors will provide incident support to help guide schools through specific events.

What You Need to Know

- TPSS is adopting a suspension program that prioritizes restorative practices and “in school time” that will lead to fewer incidents and ultimately fewer out of school suspensions (OSS).
- A team approach and family involvement will create checks and balances to create a more fair process for all students.
- Student Services and Principal Supervisors will provide professional development and incident-specific support to assist schools in adopting the restorative ISS program.
- We are committed to continuing to norm, build capacity monitoring, and coaching on the definition of infractions including “willful disobedience” and “disrespecting adults” to ensure they are not unnecessarily excluding students from learning, especially those who have experienced disproportionately harsh discipline.

Procedural Safeguards and Due Process

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

Due process is a formal safeguard put in place to ensure checks and balances to high stakes decisions such as suspensions and expulsions. This process should have many adults involved to ensure fairness, and students as well as families should be informed throughout the process.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

At TPSS, we believe that most incidents currently leading to suspensions and expulsions can be prevented by: 1) attending to healthy school cultures where students have trusting relationships with adults and one another; 2) using the SAT process and other student and family supports proactively; and 3) creating classroom cultures where students are busy doing meaningful work and holding one another accountable for high expectations.

We also understand there are times when it is necessary for students to be removed from a classroom or a school for a period of time. In the past, the school-level administrator who received the discipline referral served as the sole evaluator and decision maker. Families and students were informed of their right to appeal, and if they felt these decisions were unfair, could request a review of the situation by the Student Services Department.

We no longer believe this is adequate to ensure equity and keep students learning. Our punitive discipline approaches continue to be applied to Black students, students with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ students at disproportionate rates. We must do more to ensure this is not the case.

We aim to significantly limit the number of times a student is removed from learning -- either from their class or the school. We have refined the guidelines regarding when it is appropriate for students to be removed. All staff have been trained on the limited infractions that require removal, but also, as important, our team is working with staff to increase their capacity to prevent incidents from occurring in the first place and de-escalating when they do happen.

If a student must be referred for removal, the Assistant Principal or the discipline designee is no longer the sole decider. The Principal must be consulted and must ultimately determine the school did everything possible to prevent the student's removal, both leading up to and after the incidents. If that is not the case, the removal request will be denied.

Principal Supervisors and Student Services Department staff will be alerted every time a student is suspended or expelled, and will regularly review the data and follow up with Principals if the information provided does not appear evidence-based or meet the new guidelines. On a bi-monthly basis, the Superintendent, Principal Supervisors, and Student Services Department staff will meet to review the data for patterns. If particular schools, classrooms, and/or students are frequently appearing in the removal category, TPSS will proactively address this with a plan at the school.

Procedural Safeguards for Students with Disabilities

School personnel may remove a student with a disability or suspected disability who violates a Code of Student Conduct from his or her current placement to an appropriate interim alternative educational setting, another setting, or suspension for not more than 10 consecutive school days, to the extent that those alternatives are applied to students without disabilities, but may not change the student's placement.

After a student with a disability has been removed from his or her current placement for 10 school days in the same school year, during any subsequent days of removal, the school district must provide services that enable the student to participate in the general education curriculum and progress toward meeting his or her Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals. In addition, the student should receive a functional behavioral assessment and Behavioral Intervention Plan designed to address the behavior violation so that it does not recur.

Whenever an action involving a removal that constitutes a change of placement for a student is contemplated, a Manifestation Determination Review is required. The IEP team or Section 504 Committee shall review evaluation and diagnostic results and other relevant information to determine if the conduct in question was caused by or had a direct and substantial relationship to the student's disability; or if the conduct in question was the direct result of the district's failure to implement the IEP or Individual Accommodation Plan (IAP).

Any parent of a student with a disability who disagrees with any decision regarding placement or the manifestation determination, or the school district believes that maintaining the current placement of the student is substantially likely to result in injury to the student or others, may appeal the decision by requesting a due process hearing.

What You Need to Know

- Any action that removes a student from learning -- either from a class or from a school -- is a serious decision that has far-reaching consequences. While it is sometimes necessary, we are taking decisive action to limit how often it happens.
- Having one person who can process, decide, and implement a suspension or expulsion isn't enough to safeguard student and family rights; therefore, we are adding steps to address this issue.
- The Superintendent and the Principal Supervisors will be paying close attention to suspension and expulsion data overall, as well as procedural safeguards as we make these shifts.

Handle with Care/Physical Constraints

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

Restraint and seclusion at school should never be used except in situations where a child's behavior poses imminent danger of serious physical harm to him or herself or others. Restraint and seclusion should be avoided to the greatest extent possible without endangering the safety of students and staff. It is the school's responsibility to foster learning in a safe, healthy environment for all children, teachers, and staff.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The "Shifts")

Student and employee safety is our top priority. TPSS will make every effort to structure school environments and provide supports so that restraint and seclusion are unnecessary. Any behavioral intervention must be consistent with the child's rights to be treated with dignity and free from abuse. Schools are prohibited from applying any practice, including restraining students, in a manner that discriminates against students who have special needs. Further, families with special needs students are able to opt out of the use of seclusion or restraint entirely if a doctor determines that such a practice would lead to psychological or physical harm.

The district has developed a program, "Handle with Care", that is dedicated to reducing violence through tension reduction, preventative actions, and prompt skillful/appropriate interventions, and creating a universal perception of physical and psychological safety measures. Each school will develop and designate a "Handle with Care" team that will be utilized to de-escalate such incidents. Every administrator, teacher, and paraprofessional on this team will be required to receive training by a certified instructor.

The Tangipahoa Parish School System is committed to training staff on how to deal with behavioral challenges in a manner that is not only safe, but also preserves the student's dignity. The goal is to help create and promote a safer, more caring environment that is conducive to learning. The "Handle with Care" Program consists of 8 certified instructors who will provide district-wide training and guidance on all verbal and physical interventions.

What You Need To Know

- Seclusion and physical restraint may only be used as a last resort after all verbal de-escalation approaches have been used and only if the student's behavior poses an imminent danger to self or others.
- The "Handle with Care" Program is dedicated to reducing violence through tension reduction, preventative actions, prompt skillful/appropriate interventions, and creating a universal perception of physical and psychological safety measures.

Role of School Resource Officers

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

The purpose of utilizing School Resource Officers (SRO) in schools is to **prevent** unnecessary or inappropriate arrests, referral to law enforcement contact with the Juvenile Justice System, and violations of civil rights. The job responsibilities of a law enforcement officer working in a school involves multiple roles. This includes carrying out his or her sworn duty to enforce the law and going beyond that traditional role to include the role of educator and resource/problem solver. As a problem solver, the SRO should be viewed by students as a “friendly face” seen throughout the campus to promote and support overall campus safety.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

Prior to 2021, the Tangipahoa Parish School District had little to no input regarding who was selected as our School Resource Officers. This decision was made primarily by the law enforcement agencies with which we partner. However, in almost every case, the officers’ salaries are funded by the TPSS. While School Resource Officers receive initial training by their prospective agency, TPSS has not provided ongoing training for them to support their work in schools with students and their families. Additionally, prior to this time, very little guidance was given to District schools regarding when to call outside law enforcement when situations arise at schools. Of course, all this is problematic because: 1) the district has no voice in the selection of those individuals who are working on our campuses with our students; and 2) because the lines are blurred on how and when school resource officers should engage with students. Also, there is no current system to assess the appropriateness of engagement by School Resource Officers or the level of training needed for them to properly engage with students.

To engage and utilize school resource officers more appropriately in schools, the Tangipahoa Parish School System will:

- Share in the commitment of recruiting and selecting School Resource Officers based on specific criteria to ensure that only the most effective individuals are selected to support students on our campuses.
- Develop a comprehensive ongoing professional development training program for all school resource officers each year.
- Develop clear rules and procedures for School Resource Officers to follow when engaging with students on campus, and communicate this information to school staff.
- Establish a reporting system for engagement to progress monitor incidents at school when School Resource Officers engage with students and/or their families.
- Work with School Resource Officers to align with the District’s Core Values and promote a culture that is compassionate, respectful, and great.
- Work with School Resource Officers to develop training programs for students on how to stay safe at school and in the community.
- Work with School Resource Officers to develop a protocol to encourage students to speak up against violence at school and/or in their community.
- Develop guiding principles and expectations (non-negotiables) for a performance-based management system to evaluate School Resource Officers.

What You Need to Know

- The purpose of utilizing School Resource Officers in schools is to **prevent** unnecessary or inappropriate arrests, referral to law enforcement, contact with the Juvenile Justice System, and/or violations of civil rights.
- TPSS will more intentionally recruit, train, and evaluate School Resource Officers.
- TPSS will create clear rules, procedures and reporting systems for engaging with students and families.
- TPSS will utilize School Resource Officers as part of an integrated approach to create a safe school community.

Relationship with Law Enforcement

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

Our goal is to have a safe learning environment for all. Our response to situations and our ability to *de-escalate* rather than *escalate* the situation matters. Every attempt must be made to allow students time to “regroup” and reflect on their behavior.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

While all our parish high schools and some junior high schools have School Resource Officers on campus to support students and faculty, the majority of our schools do not have them. Currently, when issues arise with students who are uncontrollable or who pose a safety concern with themselves or others, school administrators call local law enforcement if they are unable to contact the student’s family.

Law enforcement and schools differ in a number of ways: 1) The two professions come from very different perspectives, representing different professional cultures; 2) They have different jobs and different missions - schools educate and law enforcement agencies protect the public’s safety; 3) Each may have their own perception of the other’s profession and may have different expectations when it comes to discipline in schools; and 4) School administrators discipline a student’s inappropriate behavior while a law enforcement officer may legally charge someone with disorderly conduct or assault.

When law enforcement officers arrive on the scene at a school, they respond according to how they have been trained to respond to a situation in the community, dealing with adults - not children. In some cases, law enforcement officers have handcuffed students who were acting inappropriately at school, placed them in the back of a police car, and transported them to their family. Additionally, many times students are issued a summons to appear in court because of their behavior at school. This kind of reaction begins to build the “school-to-prison pipeline pathway” for students because it tends to make them believe they are criminals. It can also cause them to develop a mindset that they are bad because of law enforcement and court involvement.

Law enforcement will not be called to handle ungovernable students at school or to transport students home. The only times law enforcement should be called to a school are as follows:

1. When a visitor to the campus poses a serious threat to the staff or students by trying to cause bodily harm;
2. When a student has a weapon and is threatening to harm students or staff members; or
3. When a student is in possession of drugs on campus.

If there is a situation with an uncontrollable student disrupting the learning environment and nothing the school staff has done to diffuse the situation has been successful, school administrators may contact a trained School Resource Officer at another school to come assist, or they may call the TPSS Student Services Department for guidance.

What You Need to Know

- Law enforcement officers may only be called to a school if a visitor to campus poses a serious threat to the staff or students, a student has a weapon and is threatening harm, or a student is in possession of drugs on campus.
- Law enforcement should not be used when a student is persistently disrupting the learning environment. Principals should contact his or her Principal Supervisor, a School Resource Officer at another school, or the TPSS Student Services Department for guidance.
- Involving law enforcement officers has consequences. If that happens, we likely missed an opportunity for intervention. We are committed to reflecting on the incident and understanding opportunities for making earlier interventions.

A New Way of Handling Student Absences

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

Poor attendance can influence whether children are able to read proficiently by the end of third grade or whether they are held back a grade. By sixth grade, chronic absenteeism becomes a leading indicator that a student will drop out of high school. Students who improve their attendance rate have a much greater chance of achieving academic success and graduating from high school prepared for college or the workforce. Students who live in communities with high levels of poverty are four times more likely to be chronically absent than others, often for reasons beyond their control, i.e. unstable housing, unreliable transportation, lack of access to healthcare services, etc.

Attendance rates improve when schools do the following:

1. Engage students and parents in positive ways;
2. Use proactive strategies to deal with excessive absenteeism; and
3. Provide mentors for chronically absent students.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

Prior to 2018, the TPSS truancy rate (students missing 15 or more days of school per year) was above the national average at all grade bands. As a result of the high truancy rates, in 2018, the district “beefed up” its approach to student attendance by focusing on students who miss more than 3 days with unexcused absences by identifying school level points of contact for attendance tracking, and contacting parents to find out the cause of students’ missed days. If parents are unable to submit a doctor’s excuse or a written parent excuse for the absence and the pattern continues, the parent and student are summoned to Truancy Court and referred to FINS (Families in Need of Services) in attempts to improve student attendance.

The pitfalls of this approach are that it focused on families trying to “document” the absence to avoid going to court rather than understanding the reason missing instruction at school negatively impacts the students’ ability to be successful in school and prepared for life after high school. Families become frustrated and, many times, become confrontational with school staff who try to hold them accountable for their children attending school regularly.

This approach is primarily based on punitive measures. While it was successful in significantly reducing student truancy, it also sent a negative message to parents with punitive consequences for families who are already battling socio-economic challenges and family dysfunction that often contributes to the excessive absences of their child or children.

The shift from “truancy” to “chronic absence” is a huge shift in mindset and approach. Truancy focuses on counting only unexcused absences, emphasizing compliance with school rules, and relies on legal administrative solutions. On the other hand, chronic absenteeism focuses on counting all absences (excused, unexcused, suspensions) while emphasizing the academic impact of missed days and utilization of community-based, positive strategies to support students and their families.

Moving forward, our approach to solving attendance issues will include a three-tiered process built upon good foundational supports in every school.

TIER 1: Tier I represents universal strategies to encourage good attendance for all students.

- District-wide Attendance Awareness Campaign;
- Clear, concise and consistent communication about schedules and expectations;
- Predictable daily/weekly routines, rituals and celebrations;
- Community building to create belonging and connection;
- Taking attendance in a caring manner;
- Personalized outreach and communication to families when students are absent;
- Recognition of good and improved attendance;
- Individual wellness check and connectivity assessments;
- Facilitate access to food, health/telehealth and supports for other basic needs; and
- Regular monitoring of attendance data to activate supports and identify trends.

TIER 2: Tier 2 provides early intervention for students who need more support to avoid chronic absence.

- Using absenteeism data to activate targeted supports;
- Monthly review of attendance data with Principals to highlight successes and lessons learned;
- Virtual/physically distanced family meeting or home visit when absences add-up;
- Individual attendance plan developed with families and students;
- Additional tech support and training for families and students;
- Mentoring (in-person and virtual);
- Tailored physical and mental health supports; and
- Prioritizing participation in expanded learning.

TIER 3: Tier 3 offers intensive support for students facing the greatest challenges to getting to school.

- Intensive outreach to locate the student and his/her family and assess the situation; and
- Coordinated case management with multiple systems, including child welfare, mental health, health, housing/homelessness and as a last resort, juvenile justice.

What You Need to Know

- TPSS is shifting our mindset and approach from “truancy” to “chronic absence”. Chronic absenteeism focuses on counting all absences (excused, unexcused, suspensions) while emphasizing the academic impact of missed days and utilization of community-based, positive strategies to support students and their families.
- Our approach to solving attendance issues will include a three-tiered process that promotes universal strategies to encourage good attendance for all students, provides early intervention for students who need more support to avoid chronic absence, and offers intensive support for students facing the greatest challenges of getting to school.

Residency Checks/Home Visits

Why This Topic is in the Blueprint

Based on our active Federal Desegregation Case, students are required to attend school within their home attendance zone, unless they have an approved transfer to attend a school outside of their normal attendance zone. Our District is under court orders to comply with this requirement. Residency checks/home visits are the method we use to verify that a student lives within the attendance zone.

Where Things Are Now and What We Are Changing (The “Shifts”)

Currently, schools may ask the district to do a residency check/home visit if they suspect the student does not reside in the school’s attendance zone. There are usually “red flags” that get the school administrators’ attention. These may include the student arriving late for school, attendance issues, reports from bus drivers, and/or letters sent to the 911 address that are returned to the school. When school administrators have concerns that the residency of the student is impacting his or her attendance and academic performance, they will request the District to conduct a residency check/home visit after the school has made many attempts by various means (email, mail, notes home with the student) to contact the student’s parents/family. Additionally, home visits are initiated to simply conduct a “wellness check” to ensure that a student is safe. As a result, it is often determined that the student may no longer reside at the listed address.

The District utilizes police officers to perform home visits to confirm residency status of the family. When the officer establishes there is evidence that supports the student/family does not live at that 911 address, the student is automatically dropped from the district’s enrollment count and dropped from that school - without parent notification. This is problematic because it immediately drops a student from our schools, which usually is successful in getting the parents’ attention. The negative side of this strategy is that it does not give the parent the due process of providing documentation to prove the residency check/home visit inaccurate, and the student may have lost critical instructional learning time at school during the process.

This same process will apply; however, once it has been determined by the officer that the student/family does not reside within the school attendance zone, a letter will be sent notifying the student and/or parent of the finding and providing a five-day period of time for responding to the finding of non-residency **before** the student is dropped from school. This procedure will provide parents a due process period and time to respond to the officer’s finding while keeping the student engaged in instruction at the school.

What You Need to Know

- The school and the District must make every attempt possible to communicate with parents, students, and families when issues surface regarding verification of their residency.
- Five days of due process will be provided to allow parents to explain why the officer’s residency check/home visit resulted in a report that indicated they do not live at the address on file with the TPSS.