

School Improvement Plan - 2024 - 2025
SOUTH SPENCER HIGH SCHOOL

Our School and Our Community

The student population of 354 at South Spencer High School is comprised of 191 male students and 163 female students of which there are 17 African Americans, 3 Latin Americans, 3 Asian and 1 American Indian. The school population comes from a rural, small-town environment representing low income, middle income and professional households, as well as, government subsidized households.

Statement of mission, vision, and beliefs

Consistent with the school's mission of enabling students to become successful lifelong learners and contributors to society, the school program at South Spencer High School reflects a comprehensive, broad-based organization of learning opportunities. The school develops programs that satisfy the physical needs of students as well as the creative talents of students through basic and advanced physical education programs and an advanced art curriculum, instrumental band, vocal music, and drama programs. School-to-work initiatives are organized through an interdisciplinary education program as well as through an implemented career intern program. This part of the program is further strengthened by student enrollment in area vocational programs designed to focus on productive skills for both the classroom and the workplace. The school also maintains a full program of extra-curricular activities for all members of the student population.

Educational Programming and the Learning Environment

The fundamental strength of the school program is founded on the broad academic offerings ranging from state-required classes to college-level/dual credit and advanced placement classes throughout the curriculum. It is the intent of South Spencer High School to provide meaningful programs and learning opportunities for all levels of interest and ability. Special needs are satisfied through very thorough planning and an implementation process of designing individual educational plans involving both school personnel and the parents. Needs and interests of our students are also determined through large group interest surveys such as the ASVAB, while the PSAT and ILEARN provide detailed data reflecting the achievement levels as well as any academic deficiencies of our students.

In addition to the testing data, parent and professional advisory groups serve our school program specifically in consumer education, business and interdisciplinary education, and our agricultural program. The advisory groups represent all levels of business and industry in our immediate area and provide valuable insight into employment and skill needs of our workforce. This partnership with the community is especially productive in developing the technical skill, vocational, and the business skills opportunities that we have throughout our curriculum.

South Spencer High School has also created a homeroom program, which assigns approximately twenty (20) students to each teacher. The program is called KRUNCH: K-Knowledge, R-Remediation, U-Understanding, N-Networking, C-Clubs, H-Homework. Each day this time is provided for purposes of disseminating important information, reviewing important issues, and providing a "home" site for each student. It is during this program that many critical pieces of information are shared and many different pieces of student data are collected. This

homeroom program allows a more personal touch to our school environment providing opportunities for students and teachers to become familiar with each other while providing a safe, consistent home base.

The services in the guidance office offer both academic and non-academic assistance to our students. The director of guidance facilitates programs to assist students with social and psychological problems. Additionally, we have a shared social worker who specializes in and aids with the social and emotional issues that our students face.

Health needs of our student population are met through a comprehensive testing and record-keeping system involving not only our school nurse but also each teacher as an advisor. The school nurse completes required tests and screenings while health related information is distributed through our homeroom program. Other health services are provided as a result of our close working relationship with the youth services portion of the County Welfare and our partnership with Southern Hills Counseling Services that focuses on psychological and emotional difficulties. Drug awareness and prevention programs are a part of the science, social studies and health curriculum.

An Alternative Educational Program has been developed and implemented to provide learning opportunities for those students who indicate inability to function in the traditional school setting. In lieu of suspensions and expulsions students are placed in the Alternative School to continue their academics. The Alternative Educational Program closely follows the curriculum and academic expectations of the regular classroom conditions absent from the regular school setting that tend to distract some students and impede their academic success. In 2023-24 we had 8 students earn their high school diploma through the Alternative Educational Program. Many others have earned their GED.

One problem facing students in the alternative education program was attendance. Whether it was because of excessive absences or suspensions, once these students got behind, a majority of them completely stopped trying. The reason for this is that once they realize that they would receive zeroes on all the work they missed, they begin to feel completely overwhelmed. To foster this issue, the Spencer County Circuit court has established a truancy court in conjunction with the Juvenile Probation Office. Students accumulating ten unexcused absences or ten unexcused tardies are referred to Truancy Court.

Another challenge facing alternative education students is attitude. Many of the students in this program demonstrate anger toward most authority figures. They also feel they are being treated unfairly and that no matter how hard they try they will not pass their classes. As a result, a high percentage of these students completely stop working after they receive their grades.

Non-academic needs for students with special needs, physical and other, are satisfied through the membership in an area Special Education Cooperative. In partnership with the school, needs for each qualifying individual are identified and then services and programs for each individual are designed and implemented. The services range from one-on-one instructional assistance in the regular classroom to full-time aid for those more physically and mentally challenged. Through the non-academic programs and services, the school has created a culture and an organization to identify and satisfy the needs of all of our students. Our High Ability Advisory Council agreed upon the following items:

1. Use 120 IQ as the cut score for identifying and reporting "general intellectual" students.

2. The Levels of Service Approach, as developed by Donald Treffinger, will be the foundational structure through which our high ability elementary students will be served, and as such, was included in the narrative portion of the 2015-2016 high ability grant.
3. Leveled guided reading groups.
4. Accelerated math groupings.
5. Advanced placement and dual credit courses.

In partnership with the area Special Education Cooperative, students with special needs are accommodated in programs and in personal support systems. Each qualifying student benefits from an Individual Education Plan that specifies the extent of services needed to best serve the student. These services range from one-on-one instructional assistance in the classroom to full-time individual aids for the more physically and mentally challenged students. Inclusion is implemented to a maximum degree that is made more effective through the extensive personnel support program. A Resource Room, equipped with current technology, is also available for special needs students.

A corporation 504 plan highlights the means by which our school and our school corporation satisfies the needs of the handicapped is available for review. This plan allows for classroom, restroom, outside areas, and transportation accommodations. Vans and buses are equipped with a lift apparatus so that no student is left out of any learning opportunity. The high school and the corporation are very dedicated to making certain that we take every measure to ensure the availability of appropriate learning opportunities for all students.

The administration and faculty at South Spencer High School realize the importance of making an effective transition from eighth grade to the ninth grade. As a result, the school undertakes an extensive orientation and information giving program. In the spring each year, our director of guidance begins the program by meeting with the core curriculum teachers of our middle school. The director of guidance reviews the high school graduation requirements and explains the curricular offerings and sequences available at the high school. Through this training of middle school teachers, high school creates a body of student advocates equipped with pertinent, current, and accurate information. After meeting with the faculty, the director of guidance and principal conduct two sets of meetings. The first meetings are with all eighth grade students in small groups. During these meetings, high school graduation requirements and course sequencing are presented. The same information is then shared with parents in an evening meeting. A week before the start of the school year there is also an orientation for incoming ninth grade students and parents. During this time, students are given the opportunity to ask questions and become familiar with the facility thus making the transition from eighth grade to their freshman year much smoother.

As students approach their senior year in high school, the guidance department makes information available on the guidance web page concerning colleges and universities, as well as a multitude of scholarship information. Students check the web page regularly to discover new information or new scholarship availability. The guidance department also meets with parents specifically to assist parents in completing financial aid applications.

As students enter our high school from another school, it is understood that special assistance may be necessary. Facilitated by the director of guidance, students new to our school are assigned a student mentor who provides tours, gives information, and answers questions

and, therefore, becomes an identifiable source of help for each new student. Additionally, the guidance department facilitates a new enrollment process meeting for the student and the parents.

South Spencer High School maintains a broad range of co-curricular activities to satisfy the interests and abilities of the student population. Clubs offer creative and academic outlets for students while athletics affords a more physical display of ability. Clubs and organizations available at South Spencer High School include but are not limited to: Future Farmers of America (FFA), Fellow of Christian Athletes (FCA), Beta Club, Drama Club, Spell Bowl Team, Academic Super Bowl Team, Key Club, Chess Club, Poetry Club, Art Club, and Archery. The high school also provides opportunities for creative expression through the choral music groups, jazz band, marching band, pep band, concert band, drama presentations including a full musical production, cheerleading, and dance team. These groups extend the classroom by developing collaborative social interaction and group dynamics encouraged by workforce development theories. The service organizations allow students to become more aware of the greater needs of the world around them while developing their character to better become a caring individual and experience the rewards of being able to help others.

Interscholastic sports for both boys and girls include cross-country, tennis, basketball, swimming, track and field, baseball/softball, cheerleading, soccer, wrestling and golf. Gender specific sports for girls includes volleyball and for boys includes football. Athletic programs create a wonderful opportunity for our students to learn more about group collaboration and cooperation and working towards a successful end. Athletics also create an environment for physical success that goes beyond normal classroom opportunities.

School Organization and Culture

Our school culture is also one of shared decision-making and active participation. We are organized through a series of standing committees as well as committees of more specific, limited focus. Standing committees include the Faculty Cabinet, made up of representative faculty members; the Department Coordinators Committee, made up of the chairperson from each department, the Rebel Rewards, made up of faculty, staff and student representatives to coordinate the student rewards program, and the School Improvement Committee, made up of representatives from the faculty, staff, administration, and community. Specific committees created for special study projects have included a Curriculum Committee that implemented a weighted curriculum. With Graduation Pathways, SSHS will develop a Portfolio Committee to create a portfolio system. A source of pride for our school is the warm, caring, friendly attitude and atmosphere that we try to sustain. There are many opportunities for both students and adults to actively promote that attitude. Specific programs that nurture a caring, friendly, helpful attitude include our homeroom program, Beta Club, Student Council and the Key club. These clubs support the needs of older citizens living in nursing homes with a clothes and Christmas drive, support raising funds for the "W.H.O.O. for Cancer" in the fight against breast cancer, participate in Operation Christmas Child, where we have sent over 100 shoe boxes filled with toys and toiletries at Christmas time to needy children all over the world, as well as participating as good citizens in community projects.

W.H.O.O. - We Help Our Own. Several years ago our faculty initiated a project that generated money for students in need and it continues to flourish. Each year all the organizations in the school hold a carnival for high school and middle school students. Each club

has a booth and all proceeds are put into the school's W.H.O.O. account. This money is used for various purposes to help students and families in need. The carnival usually raises between \$1500 and \$2000 annually. This money has gone to help fund our clothing closet, financially assisting students who have fallen on hardship such as a fire to the home, providing financial assistance to teachers who have battled illness, etc..

The Beta Club is involved in a blood drive that supplements the local American Red Cross which provides for families in our area. The Beta Club works closely with the County Social Services to identify families in need and have directly assisted more than 120 families in our school community.

Citizenship and character education is a part of our daily expectations throughout the school environment. Specifically, citizenship is emphasized in the service organizations of Beta Club, Key Club, and Student Council. Character building happens as those students learn and experience the real rewards in helping others. Our student behavior code, as expressed in the student handbook, provides a fair and consistent attitude about student citizenship. The athletic code also calls for appropriate citizenship of our athletes. We are proud to have received recognition as being outstanding in terms of student sportsmanship and behavior. We received the state athletic association recognition award two consecutive years. Additionally, we exhibited our citizenship and character through:

- The presentation of a moving Veterans' Day school assembly honoring those who have fought for our freedom.
- Students who have earned a GPA of 3.5 or better are honored at an Underclassmen Awards Night and Senior Awards Night in the spring of each year.
- Special awards are also given based on the number of times a student has earned attendance at the banquet.
- Recognition in the "Student of the Month" program. Each month, faculty members have the opportunity to nominate a boy and a girl from each class to be named the "Student of the Month." After nominations, a faculty vote determines the monthly winners. At the end of the school year, students who are named "Student of the Month" are introduced at the meeting of the Board of School Trustees, are guests at a special luncheon attended by the school administrators, and receive gifts including a special t-shirt.

Safe and Disciplined Learning Environment

South Spencer High School maintains a clean, safe, and orderly school setting. However, that is not accomplished by accident. The school is very focused on drug-prevention, orderly student behavior and school safety. The school maintains a zero-tolerance for safety violations, threats, and drug or alcohol abuse.

To better ensure the safety of our school facility, monitoring cameras have been installed at appropriate locations throughout the building. A systematic duty assignment also exists placing teachers in selected areas at selected times to help guarantee the continuous good behavior and safety of the student population. We have door buzz-in locks on all main entrances to the school that are monitored by three administrative assistants in the office.

There are two primary documents that outline the school's position towards safety, drugs and student behavior. The first document is the school emergency procedures. The guide is a comprehensive written document that highlights suggested action in various emergency or atypical situations. Teachers are encouraged to refer to the guide for many different situations

ranging from tornado drills to how to deal with grief in the classroom. The guide is also reviewed with the student body so that all members of our school are familiar with expectations during emergency situations. The second major document is the student handbook, a thorough documentation of policies regarding student behavior as well as possible disciplinary action should inappropriate behavior occur. The school emphasizes critical student behavior expectations listed in the handbook at the beginning of each year. The school requires that students share the handbook with their parents, proof of which is in the signed statement on file.

We are proud of our record in terms of student behavior as the number of out of school suspensions have declined in recent years, but the knowledge exists that we must maintain a constant vigil against threats to the safety of our school. A student dress code exists that prohibits long coats, baggy pants, offensive slogans, and indecent attire. The school also has an in-school suspension room that allows students to be absent from the normal flow of the school and student body but still maintain current status with academic responsibilities. Visitors are required to register at the school office and are not allowed to leave the office until school personnel accompany the visitor. In the event that an intruder is detected in the school, all school personnel activate a well-rehearsed plan of defense.

Challenging Standards and Curriculum

The curriculum at South Spencer High School is a structure that fully accommodates the mission of enabling students to be successful lifelong learners and contributors to society. The intention of the faculty and staff is to move each student forward in terms of achievement using the curriculum as the method and the means to that end. The State of Indiana requires 40 credits to be earned for graduation, with a 7-period day students are able to learn core classes at a reasonable pace and allows teachers enough class time to thoroughly teach the entire semester. Typically, at South Spencer High School, students earn over 40 credits by their senior year. We have six AP and dual credit courses offered. Each core curriculum area has at least 1 AP class to challenge our students.

Personal and intellectual growth is developed through the entire curricular organization. Full learning opportunities exist in the core curriculum areas, foreign language, vocational programs, work-study programs, industrial technology programs, art and music programs, physical education and health programs, consumer and homemaking programs, advanced placement courses, and advanced academic courses. The curriculum is diverse but carefully designed to create meaningful learning opportunities for all students. Not only does the curriculum afford vast academic opportunities for the students, the non-academic organization also provides broad opportunities for student growth.

Academic Honors and Core 40 Curriculum

The school program is organized to completely satisfy the mission of the school. This is aligned with the state of Indiana offering more than one classification of high school diplomas. Academic honors diplomas have more extensive criteria than Core 40 diplomas or General Studies diplomas. Effective with the class of 2018, Academic Honors students will be required to take two AP courses or 1 AP course and 1 dual credit course. The school is organized on a 7-period day schedule that allows students the opportunity to be involved in at least 7-8 courses each school year. Expectations of student performance, regardless of the level of the

class, are based on the Indiana Academic Standards. While instructional methodology may vary and assessments vary, the expectations of student achievement are based on the Standards. Teachers have been asked to align the state Standards with their own curriculum to be sure that 1) the Standards were being delivered in curriculum, and 2) all assessments were consistent with the Standards. Teachers were given release time to work as departments to complete the alignment project. Teachers continue to align the new state standards with their curriculum.

Students, with parental consent, choose the sequence and level of courses they feel are appropriate. Standardized test scores, past academic performance, and interest inventories are used to help counsel the students and the parents about the best course selection. However, through consultation with the classroom teacher and observation, a student may very well change levels of classes and ultimately change their course sequence. Again, that change and movement is made with agreement from the parents and in concert with school officials. A strict adherence does not exist to any specific course sequence for any student. For the student who is particularly talented in Math or Science, that student is free to pursue the most advanced course work available while perhaps meeting success in a general Language Arts class. To satisfy its mission, South Spencer High School offers many opportunities to satisfy the needs and abilities of the students. Advanced Placement courses are offered in English, Biology, Chemistry, Calculus, U.S. History and World History. Dual credit courses are also offered in AP English, Anatomy and Physiology, Pre-Calculus and AP Calculus.

Additional Learning Needs

Students whose interests are not found in academics can pursue applied learning through business, consumer and homemaking, agriculture or vocational programs. Students more at risk can continue their education in the Alternative School. To date, because of the ethnic makeup of our student population, limited English proficiency programs have not been implemented.

For many reasons, students may not be able to attend classes on a regular basis. For health reasons, a student may not physically be able to attend school. As a result, the school can provide a homebound teacher who travels to the home of the student and can provide up to 10 hours of direct instruction in the home each week. During the time that students may be seeking psychological or physical assistance in professional institutions, the school works very closely with coordinating authorities to provide the same coursework that is being delivered in the regular classroom.

The professional faculty at South Spencer High School continually aligns the Indiana Academic Standards with the school curriculum. During the school year faculty members are to list the standard, identify the time of year that the standard was delivered in the classroom, the types of learning activities implemented for each standard, and the types of assessment used to evaluate student progress with each standard. This project takes place in each curricular area of the school program. As a follow up to that activity, teachers are asked to list the standard appropriate for each day's lesson plans. The principal reviews that plan during teacher evaluation.

Student data is reviewed each year by the administration, director of guidance and department coordinators. As the state-testing program provides detailed information about student performance in Math and Language Arts, the two departments complete detailed data analysis. From that data, they plan a direction for remediation and supplemental course work.

The department coordinators committee meets monthly with the principal. Here curricular concerns are addressed, data is shared, and current issues are brought forth. It is during these meetings that the needs of the students are most closely identified as they relate to the overall curriculum. Certainly trends in enrollment and student interest impact the curriculum review. As a result, with the information shared from the coordinators meeting, each teacher is asked to evaluate their own courses in terms of student achievement and in terms of being able to adequately treat all of the standards for that specific course. With that evaluation, teachers are then asked to revise their course description to be published for the next Course Description Handbook. This serves as the basis for the review and up-date of the course syllabus that must be submitted each year to the principal.

The Core Curriculum

The curricular structure of the core content areas is suited to meet the learning needs of all students. All teachers have received considerable training in learning styles and the most effective way to actively engage students in the learning process. The State of Indiana requires four years of English credit and the courses are taught at various levels of complexity. Non-college bound students learn through an English curriculum that is based on a practical approach to learning, more authentic and less theory. College-bound students are challenged with more complex learning material and are urged to more readily employ higher order thinking skills. Dual Credit English (Ivy Tech) is offered to students who feel most capable of satisfying the rigors of advanced courses.

The math curriculum is sequential and diverse, offering a course sequence to satisfy the state requirements as well as a course sequence designed to develop advanced math skills. College bound students develop their math skills from Geometry, Algebra II, Pre-Calculus, Calculus and AP Calculus. Students cross over into the subjects of Chemistry and Computer Science making advanced uses of the application of math skills in other subject areas. Math labs are required for remediation of students in need, mathematically.

As is the case in other core content areas, students can meet the minimum state Science requirements in Earth Science and General Biology. College bound students can sequence through the Science curriculum in Astronomy, Chemistry, and Anatomy and Physiology. For the advanced science student, AP Chemistry and AP Biology are offered with emphasis on laboratory studies and writing to illustrate knowledge of difficult concepts, as well as offering dual credit in Chemistry (2), Biology, and English Composition. This writing is parallel to the school-wide emphasis on writing across the curriculum, an initiative that is an outgrowth of writing scores on the ILEARN.

South Spencer High School is fortunate to have considerable student interest in foreign language. Spanish is taught at three levels when student enrollment requires a level four class. The course is taught in sequence and focuses on historical, cultural, and linguistic fundamentals of the languages and their native countries. Opportunities abound for cross-curricular learning incorporating the many facets of the study of the language and the people. It is natural to integrate art, history, and sociology into the learning activities of our foreign language courses. The foreign language program is further strengthened by the fact that the foreign language teacher is native to Puerto Rico.

The Social Studies program offers students organized courses in which they further

their knowledge about world civilizations throughout history as well as the opportunity to advance their knowledge of the United States. Requirements are also satisfied through Sociology, Psychology, Government, and Economics. AP World History and AP U.S. History, are offered for those students who are interested in a more in-depth study of history with research being a fundamental learning tool.

The Arts are organized into music and visual arts. Music opportunities exist through instrumental music and chorus. More creative outlets for musical skills are seen in jazz band, marching band, pep band and Rebel Singers, a select, auditioned based singing group. Visual Arts is sequential and seen as a solid portion of the complete school program. The program is divided into the major categories of two dimensional and three dimensional. Topics such as drawing, painting, print-making and ceramics are designed to meet the state standards as well as provide students with opportunities to be engaged in significant curricular content. The standards require the fine arts program to develop historical content, criticism skills, aesthetics, production, career and integrated studies. Each student experiences each of these standards through classroom lectures, problem-solving activities aimed at production, guest speakers, virtual museum visits and written work consistent with our writing across the curriculum project. Students can enroll in various levels of art classes, each building on the knowledge gained in previous classes. One interesting feature of painting classes is the requirement that students write a journal about the artists they study and the work they have produced. The Art Department is very active throughout the school producing attractive artwork in very visible places such as our entryways and our gymnasium. In addition, advanced art students participate in local contests and had their work become a part of a calendar sponsored by the county historical society as a fund-raising activity.

The core curriculum at South Spencer High School is only a part of the total school program. Another program that makes our school outstanding is the Integrated Technology program that offers direct hands-on learning activities for students interested in industry and industrial technology. The department maintains the most modern equipment and emphasizes skills encouraged through input from area business and industry.

As is true at the university level, students must earn credits to matriculate through high school and be awarded a high school diploma. Because of our 7-period day schedule, students must have earned a minimum of 8 credits to be a sophomore, a minimum of 18 credits to be a junior and a minimum of 32 credits to be a senior. A senior cannot participate in commencement exercises if that student does not satisfy 100% of the graduation requirements. In terms of course work, each curricular area has some required sequencing. For example, a student is not eligible to enroll in the second level of a foreign language until that student has successfully completed the first level of that language. Other sequencing requirements can be found in Math, Science, Industrial Technology, and Language Arts.

Assessments and Indicators of Success

Assessment at South Spencer High School reflects a successful program. Assessments range from standardized tests to very authentic assessments aimed at measuring students' abilities to achieve and utilize real life skills. Many assessments are performance-based which is consistent with the mission of the school to help students become productive citizens.

In 1993 the school was placed on probation, our performance on the ISTEP exam placed us in the bottom 10% of the scores in Indiana. Certainly this caught the attention of the Performance Based Accreditation as well as the faculty and administration. The school immediately focused on student achievement and implemented that focus by critically analyzing standardized test scores, identifying specific inadequacies, and developing a plan to correct those issues. From an alarming performance, the school has progressed to the upper 10% of scores across the state. One initiative that sprang out of the probationary status was a new attention to assessment. Teachers were urged to use assessments that measured the essential skills and teachers were asked to identify the assessments used in the classroom through our curriculum alignment project. Student achievement became the dominating driving force in the classroom. Teachers were provided professional development activities that emphasized authentic assessment and differentiated learning styles. 4-MAT training was provided to all teachers and put to practical use through teacher-led professional development. The true reward for teacher effort can be traced in test results.

South Spencer High School received 4-Star Status based on the 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 school years; we rank in the top 25% in the state of Indiana for ECA test scores in English 10 and Algebra 1. We also made AYP. This is the third time in the school's history we have received this recognition.

South Spencer High School has shown consistent improvement in academic achievement and test scores over the past ten years. In 1996 SSHS was placed on Academic probation and scored the second to the lowest score in the state on the ISTEP test. In 2005-06 SSHS scored in the top 8% of high schools in the state of Indiana on ISTEP. Recent awards SSHS has received are the awards sponsored by the Indiana Chamber of Commerce. The Indiana Chamber of Commerce named SSHS a "Best Buy Honor Roll School" for the eighth time out of 10 years. These awards were earned based on student achievement on ISTEP, SAT Scores, student attendance, graduation rate and dollars supporting each student.

In the 2004-05 school year SSHS received the highest honor in the school's history. It was named as one of the top six high schools in the state of Indiana, by the Chamber of Commerce. SSHS received recognition as the Head of the Class, "Best of the Best". The award was based on a quality index and expenditures per student.

This award means even more due to the high rate of "at risk" students of the school. During the past few years SSHS has been awarded the Award of Excellence for Exemplary Display of Sportsmanship, Ethics and Integrity presented by the Indiana High School Athletic Association, and Best Communities for Music Education.

The academic accomplishments of the past few years have gradually improved. Seven years ago only one AP class was offered. Now there are six AP classes and we are on a weighted quality point grading system to encourage students to take the most rigorous, challenging courses available. Our SAT scores have gradually improved over the past few years. South Spencer Motorsports began in 2004 as an extracurricular activity out of the Technology Department. That year, the South Spencer Super Mileage Vehicle set an Indiana state record of over 1500 miles per gallon. The following year, with a completely new vehicle, the same group of students placed second at the Indiana State Competition and third at the national SAE competition at the Eaton Proving Grounds in Michigan. With the addition of a third vehicle in 2008, the team has won multiple Craftsmanship and People's choice awards while consistently placing in the top five at the Indiana State Competition.

In 2014, South Spencer Motorsports expanded to include High School Formula One and First Tech Challenge Robotics. The South Spencer Formula One Vehicle placed second at the Indiana competition in 2015 and fourth at the Wisconsin competition at Road America in 2016. The Rebel Robotics team placed first, second, and second at the Kentucky State Competition in 2014, 2015, and 2016 respectively and sixteenth out of a total of 119 teams at the Indiana State Competition in 2016.

In 2001 our academic team won the state championship in the Language Arts Competition. The spell bowl team qualified for state competition last year in 2015. We finished seventh in the state.

Our school has met all of the goals in the School Improvement Plan. We have just made our Adequate Yearly Progress goal for No Child Left Behind. We are an "Exemplary" school in our PL221 accountability system for 2009. In 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 SSHS received an A Rating from the Department of Education. South Spencer High School truly places academics first.

Using Assessment Result to Understand and Improve

The most dominant example of analyzing data and having that data drive educational programming can be found in the school's approach to ILEARN performance. Each year when results are received, the language arts and math departments spend considerable time in careful analysis of the results. With this analysis in hand, changes to course content are considered and remediation is planned for students in most need. Teachers provide remedial services on a planned basis drawing students from classes for very focused learning activities aimed at reducing academic inadequacies. In addition, an instructional aide is assigned to provide one-to-one and small group remediation on a pullout basis. The scores are then used as measures of success of the educational programs.

Communication with students, parents, and community is vital if all stakeholders are to approach assessment as important. To this end, the high school utilizes the monthly newsletter and large group meetings as the major platforms for communication. Prior to the ILEARN, students and parents both are informed about the test schedule and given good test-taking advice about rest and nutrition. The school then acts on this advice and provides breakfast each day of the testing period. When results are received, the principal and the director of guidance prepare a report to present to the parents through the newsletter and to the community via the local newspaper. This media release is done as a report from each school to the Board of School Trustees.

Alternative Assessments of Student Performance

Focus on assessment has increased the opportunities for student learning to be measured in a variety of ways. Some assessments are now performance-based and less emphasis is placed on pencil-paper exams. Foreign language is one area that has undergone this assessment transition. Learning still relies on a certain knowledge base of structural accuracy. However, role-play and real life situations create meaningful learning opportunities for students. Now instead of conjugating a verb in multiple tenses, students display mastery through dialogues in authentic settings, i.e. the café, the restaurant, the travel agent, at college, and in many other situations. The emphasis is on students being able to effectively use the language in a meaningful, productive way, consistent with the mission of the school and consistent with the

state standards. Other curricular areas that employ a pattern of performance-based assessments include fine arts, applied arts, consumer and homemaking, and business. In order to meet the needs of all of the students, traditional academic areas of math, science, and language arts are incorporating increasing numbers of performance assessments that reinforce the state standards and give testimony to the concept of actively engaging the students in the learning process.

The data for teacher attendance and student attendance indicates a strong school environment. There is a degree of stability associated with the high attendance rates. Teachers are committed and dedicated to the school. Likewise, the school has been successful at convincing students about the importance of good, regular attendance in school. This trend supports the theory that education best takes place when teachers and students are consistently in the learning environment. Certainly the improved test scores are one indicator of the reality of this practice.

Active Teaching and Learning

Because technology is a part of our everyday world, South Spencer High School has internet access throughout the school building. In 2012 we began our 1:1 program with every student having an iPad, but in 2017-18 we changed to Chromebooks for all students. We believe these are more suitable for daily classwork, completing papers and preparing for standardized testing.

Each curricular area focuses on learning styles that are most consistent with the curricular structure. For example, the Science Department relies heavily on lab experiences to reinforce practical knowledge. The math teachers consistently employ mobiles, manipulates, and geometric models to demonstrate visual concepts. Other learning activities include role-play, modeling, and simulation. However, the strongest emphasis for our school has been to engage students in the learning process by making classrooms and assessments more authentic.

Student-initiated learning can be seen in many projects and small group activities. The Business Department and Principle of Business Management classes utilize job simulations to bring meaning to the learning activities. The Language Arts Department encourages students to participate in writing contests, especially in the field of creative writing. Cause and effect techniques can be found in the Social Studies Department. The Industrial Technology class designs and builds storage buildings to be sold to the general public. The Art Department is also active in creating artwork appropriate for the school decor. These activities are meant to be examples of real-world authentic activities that students can apply skills from the classroom to a real situation.

Coordination of Technology Initiatives

Educational technology is a significant part of every aspect of South Spencer High School. As noted previously, South Spencer High School students received iPads in 2012 and in 2018 we switched to Chromebooks. There are printers in every classroom and teachers have direct access to digital cameras, scanners, video capture equipment, document cameras, and laser disc players. Every curricular area utilizes technology as a teaching and learning tool primarily in lab situations. Our building is completely networked and nearly all students are

enrolled in the network and have access to the network capabilities. Microsoft Office and Google Suite software is available to all teachers.

Administrative software, Harmony & Google Suite, allows easy access to all aspects of the student's education as well as many of the day-to-day functions of the school. The result is a comprehensive database that suits all school's needs: from entering student demographic information to approving leave requests. The functions of the student management package are attendance, discipline, scheduling, and increasing communication with parents through an Internet component. Harmony provides parents with the capability to view a significant portion of their child's academic record via the internet. Through secure usernames and passwords, parents have access to: attendance reports, discipline reports, progress reports, assignment summaries, homework agendas, and a school calendar. This tool gives parents the ability to stay informed about their children's education from the convenience of their home or office. Real-time information is available anytime. Google Suite, in particular, Google Classroom is known for its user-friendly online and ability to easily connect instructors and students both in and out of the classroom. Google Classroom includes basic learning management system functionality for managing enrollments, sharing documents, submitting assignments, and assigning grades, as well as personalized features for individual students.

Technology has impacted every curricular area by making the internet available for research, discovery, and exploration. Through the capabilities of technology, we now have nearly unlimited data available to our school through the Department of Education database. Because of the ease of accessing the data, significant decisions can be made about remediation and developmental programs.

The Industrial Technology Department relies on the most current software to use in the CAD program. Programming and applications classes are taught from which students with advanced skills are used as in-house technicians giving those students authentic learning experiences.

The core curriculum subject areas use technology extensively in terms of research, word processing for research papers, and charting and graphing capabilities consistent with math requirements. Students with special needs have access to the same technology as do all other students. South Spencer High School works hard to make sure technology is accessible to all students.

Career Awareness and Career Development

The curricular organization of the school provides for a systematic skill-building sequence to help students gain employment skills and make a successful transition from school to work. Vocational programs are available to students. Technical initiatives incorporate workforce skills at its core, the Interdisciplinary Cooperative Education (ICE) program allows students to actually work and earn money while being enrolled in school. The Career Intern program is another successful program allowing students the opportunity to be placed in employment/career areas of their interest. This program is targeted for college-bound students who are placed in specific career fields and assist those professionals during either a 9 or 18 week program. Students can change assignments each 9 weeks so as to use the Intern program as a direct career exploratory experience.

The Career intern program is an example of active learning and career exploration in

career fields not usually accessible to high school programs. Our students learn at doctors' offices, veterinarians' offices, lawyers' offices and health care offices. There are several seniors enrolled in the Career Intern program for the current school year. The learning from this program can be applied to the learning requirements in other curricular areas.

Professional Community

The teachers of South Spencer High School have endorsed professional growth and development as a necessity for improved student learning. Student performance data is shared through the department coordinators committee and the faculty. Based on the data and current issues, professional development activities are designed and delivered. In accordance with best practices of effective professional development, the school has a professional development committee of which one member then serves on the corporation level professional development committee.

There is no corporation budget appropriation for professional development. As a result, the high school funds professional development activities from local and fundraising activities. However, the high school has made such a commitment that professional development activities have been abundant.

The high school administration and staff maintain a consistent commitment to professional development and have been creative in funding the professional development program for high school teachers. Many teachers from all curricular areas have benefited from this ongoing commitment to professional development.

As indicated in other parts of this plan, professional development activities are teacher led. One of the following plans are implemented in professional development activities: teachers who have success stories to share; teachers who are a part of either grant teams; or the corporation staff development committee.

Non-certified employees are also included in professional development activities. Aides for students with special needs are given growth opportunities most generally provided by the area special education cooperative. Administrative assistants and clerical personnel are given training for new software and are many times included in the same training afforded to teachers. Instructional aides are included in the professional development activities that are designed for teachers. Counselors are given the opportunity to be a part of all professional development activities for teachers in addition to other training specific to their job assignment.

The driving force for all professional development is school improvement for increased student achievement. There exists no professional development if it is not tied directly to student achievement. Technology training has resulted in the increased use of the electronic medium for research, for class presentations, for creativity, for student created projects and for hands-on learning. Technology training has given teachers skills to make learning activities more authentic.

After each professional development activity, teachers are asked to evaluate the activity. If those evaluations are considered valid, then the professional development activities have been right on target. In addition to the evaluations, needs assessments are completed with the faculty. These are done to be sure that professional development activities really meet the needs of the professional staff. Professional development activities also spring out of current issues or best practices in education.

Participatory Leadership

The organizational leadership at our school can be best described as participatory. The principal has created a sophisticated and extensive committee structure intended to empower teachers to share in the decision-making and to be able to take responsibility for the overall conduct and performance of the school. Although it is clearly understood that the principal is ultimately responsible for leadership functions, she is able to have others contribute and be an integral part of that structure.

Perhaps the most effective committees that relate directly to program and policies are the department coordinators, the faculty cabinet and school improvement committee. Issues that are most directly associated with the school program are topics at the department coordinators meeting. It is from those meetings that data is shared, practices are brought forth, review and revision are encouraged, and new curricular offerings will be created. Curriculum does not change in our program without a substantial discussion at the committee level. The two-way communication is further enhanced when the department coordinators discuss important issues with the department members.

As an example of shared decision-making, the faculty determined that the school should seriously consider a system of weighting grades in advanced/college, AP classes. Out of the department coordinators meeting came a special committee charged with studying that single issue. After several meetings and with widespread input from individual faculty members, it was determined that sufficient professional support existed for weighted grades. Therefore, there was a change in policy and practice. We have gone from a 4.0 grading system to a 4.0 grading system with weighted grades.

The faculty cabinet focuses on issues that may not be directly related to the curriculum of the school but may affect other parts of our school family. As with the department coordinators, many opportunities are given for input and reaction prior to any major change taking place. This is due in part to the School Improvement Plan currently in place at our school. That plan calls for the minutes of all meetings to be posted to all teachers prior to any decision being made. This ensures that all teachers are aware of a change before it actually takes place.

All faculty members have the opportunity to be leaders and to provide effective input into policy decisions. Teachers have the ability to express their concerns or give their support through the participatory management environment of shared decision making. The internal stakeholders are clearly identified and are an important part of the organizational structure. This includes students who have served on the school improvement committee and other decision making committees

External stakeholders are included in the various advisory councils and in specific committees involving school leadership, the most visible of which is the school improvement committee. This committee is composed of teachers, parents, students, and representatives of the business community. Through committees such as the school improvement committee, external stakeholders have a very well defined vehicle for input. The charge of the school improvement committee is to form a three-year improvement plan. Because of the membership on this committee, external stakeholders will have a definite voice in the improvement initiatives of our school.

The South Spencer Scholarship Foundation is a group of external stakeholders that functions to generate financial aid for graduating seniors. The principal, although not the leader of the foundation, facilitates the goals of that group to the benefit of the student population.

The leadership of the school is mindful of the need to share new ideas and new information with the professional staff. Not only are committee meetings essential ingredients for the distribution of information, the school leadership actively encourages the professional staff to seek out professional development activities, make site visits to other schools, or view educational programming. In addition, the school principal is a member of the state professional organization (IASP) and electronically shares information from those robust groups. Other sources of educational material come from our area education service center and the Department of Education. Our media specialist also maintains a small but quality professional library, which includes several professional development video series.

The most critical and current information used by the principal and the faculty to promote continuous improvement are the results from the statewide testing program (ILEARN). The results are shared with the entire faculty and then scrutinized in great detail by the math and language arts departments. That analysis provides the foundation for remediation as well as developmental initiatives by the teachers.

Educational challenges facing the school

Like other schools which are similar to us in size and geographical locations (rural settings), our school is facing a trend of declining enrollment. This has a potentially critical impact on our school. Certainly as enrollment falls, it becomes increasingly more difficult to maintain staff size and as a result, a full menu of course offerings. It will be a challenge to not only maintain current curricular offerings but also to develop new learning initiatives. As enrollment is linked directly to budgetary concerns, the number of full-time faculty could decrease as enrollment decreases. As funding declines, it will be incumbent upon the school leadership to maintain not only the tremendous curricular program currently available, but also to expand the offerings when needed. One issue that will gain popularity will be offering courses, primarily advanced courses, on an alternating semester basis. This would allow for all advanced courses to be taught at least two times in any four-year period of time. It would be very important for the school to create a collaborative venture to build a master schedule that would create strictly minimal advanced course conflicts. However, it would be of paramount importance for the plan to be advertised well in advance so that students and parents could effectively plan the course sequence to gain full benefit from such a structure.

School, Family, and Community Partnerships and Participation

South Spencer High School makes every effort to create a partnership with the greater school community. The school recognizes the need to have all stakeholders strive to create the best learning opportunities possible. The school recognizes that it must have the help and cooperation of parents and our business community in order to be ultimately successful. The school is very fortunate to have at least three extremely strong support groups in place. First to come to mind is the band boosters who support the efforts of the music curriculum from financial considerations to supplying cooks for summer band camp. The booster group is large and very active and without any doubt, instrumental music could not exist, as we know it without the organization of the band boosters. Another strong support group is the advisory board for our agricultural program. This group is dedicated to assisting the school in making the agricultural program a viable learning environment to further the quality of agricultural careers for our students. The advisory board had been influential in our program receiving donations of

cropland from our local power plant and donation of \$40,000 from a local steel manufacturer for the purpose of raising a small herd of cattle. The cattle farm has since been sold and all proceeds were donated to the Community Foundation Scholarship program. The South Spencer Scholarship Foundation supports our school through the scholarship program. The foundation has been very successful at creating a strong financial base from which scholarships are awarded.

The school involves many parents and families in opportunities designed to support the school programs. Beyond the booster groups, we maintain family participation in other advisory roles, primarily in business education and consumer and homemaking programs. The school also makes a special effort to be sure that families have the best opportunities to be aware of the educational demands on their children. The director of guidance and the principal conduct large group parent meetings each year during which school requirements and course offerings are explained and discussed. Teachers are encouraged to mail/email "Good News Notes" to families whose child has earned special recognition through class performance. We also have the ability to email student progress reports and request parent conferences. This is further facilitated by the existence of phones in every teacher classroom. The school develops and issues a comprehensive student handbook each year. Special efforts are made at school to familiarize the students with the school codes. In order to be assured that parents have had an opportunity to review the handbook; all parents must sign a form and return it to school. The form is the parent verification that they have seen the handbook and have had the opportunity to learn and be familiar with the student behavior code and other policies regulating student life at our school. Parents are encouraged to set up meetings to discuss their student's progress. The school maintains an organized system of affording opportunities for parents to meet with school personnel. In addition, the school maintains a thorough health and nutrition care system. We are full partners with community health services. For example, our school nurse coordinates required physical exams for all athletes free of charge. Community health doctors complete these exams at the school as a contribution to the school program. We provide a breakfast program available to students each day. Our director of guidance works very closely with several area counseling services including but not limited to Southern Hills & Kairos Counseling Services to meet the emotional or psychological needs of troubled students.

The school extends learning into the community; three programs speak clearly of this mission. We have created a Career Intern program for college bound students to gain career insight into professional career opportunities. We maintain a cadet program through which students who are interested in becoming a teacher work directly with a teacher in the corporation. The most extensive thrust of extending learning into the community is the Interdisciplinary Cooperative Education (ICE) program through which students actually are gainfully employed while enrolled in regular school classes. This opportunity is more than exploratory in that it generates wages for the students.

Goals and Action Plans

Goal #1

South Spencer High School will decrease its chronic absenteeism from 16.9% in 2023-2024 to 15% in 2024-2025.

Strategies

- South Spencer High School has developed a plan with the Spencer County Circuit Court to define chronic absenteeism and identify those students who are chronically absent. At 10 days of unexcused absences, students are referred to the truancy court and they are mandated to appear in front of the judge to discuss their reasons for the chronic absences and discuss a plan moving forward to improve their attendance.
- South Spencer High School has developed a plan that addresses steps prior to a student becoming chronically absent.
 - Day 1 - Attendance secretary calls
 - Day 2 - Counselor or social worker calls
 - Day 3 - Excessive absence letter is sent home detailing expectations and possible ramifications
 - Day 4 - Mandatory student and parent conference
 - Day 5 - Excessive absence letter is sent home detailing expectations and possible ramifications
 - Day 6 - Loss of participation in ezra-curricular events hosted by South Spencer High School
 - Day 7 - Principal calls
 - Day 8 - Resource officer well-check
 - Day 9 - Principal calls
 - Day 10 - Referred to truancy court

Goal #2

South Spencer High School will increase the amount of students working towards dual credit from 44% to 50%.

- South Spencer High School will explore more dual credit opportunities with Ivy Tech. By creating more opportunities for dual credit, more students will likely take a dual credit course.
- South Spencer High School faculty and staff will continue to promote dual credit and its positive benefits for students who are considering post-high school education

Goal #3

South Spencer High School will increase the cultural competency of the schools' teachers, administrators, staff, parents and students.

Strategies

- South Spencer High School will encourage foreign exchange students through foreign exchange programs.
- South Spencer High School will encourage the faculty to use cross-curricular approaches for greater informational exchanges in order to learn about different aspects of various cultures.

- South Spencer High School will encourage the faculty to bring in speakers to discuss different cultures with the student body.
- South Spencer High School will work to improve cultural competency by implementing a character program.

Goal #4

4. South Spencer High School had 6% of the students participating in work-based-learning experiences in 2023-2024 and our goal is to increase that amount of students participating in work-based-learning experiences to 10% in 2024-2025.

Strategies

- South Spencer High School will actively bring in local companies, businesses, colleges, and military recruiters to meet with students to educate students on the post-high school opportunities in our area.
- South Spencer High School will have “recruitment fairs” each semester to educate students on the post-high school opportunities in our area.
- In a county wide effort in collaboration with Heritage Hills High School, South Spencer High School offers an annual event called ASPIRE. At this event, students will connect with area businesses and stakeholders to discuss post-high school opportunities in our area.

Professional Development

Good professional development design includes both strong content and an effective process for making initial and ongoing decisions. Relevant content is essential to ensuring that professional development helps you meet student learning goals. The school improvement goals for South Spencer High School are directly related to improved student achievement. As a result, it is necessary for the professional development plan to mirror that commitment to achievement.

The professional development plan for South Spencer High School is a product of the school improvement committee and is founded on successful principles of effective professional development. The fundamental motivation for the design of the professional development plan is to improve student learning. The plan is school-based, collaboratively designed, and will provide encouragement, motivation, and opportunity for the entire school community to function collaboratively. The professional development plan will allow teachers to improve their instructional skills resulting from more knowledge and differ their instructional strategies through advanced capacity in new technologies. In creating the professional development plan, the school improvement committee used the following criteria as a guide:

Are our professional development efforts consistent with the principles of effective professional development:

- Student centered?
- Job-embedded and collaborative?
- Adequate in duration and intensity to effect change?
- Data-driven?

- Designed, implemented, and evaluated by participants?
- Evaluated in terms of change in classroom practice and student learning?

The school improvement committee submits the professional development plan confident that this criterion will be completely satisfied.

Professional Development: The Vision

The vision for the South Spencer High School Professional Development Plan is to create a program of ongoing professional development opportunities that will bring systemic change within the high school arena through increased knowledge, improved instructional skills, and increased use of new technologies. The long-term goal of the professional development plan is to have professional development sustain itself through continuous improvement. It is the belief of the school improvement committee that the school will experience continuous improvement only through continuous improvement of the faculty, staff and school leadership. Professional development is the vehicle that will carry the professional staff and the school in their journey towards improved student learning.

Professional Development: The Goals

The goals for the professional development plan include:

1. Teachers will increase their knowledge of how to better engage all students.
2. Teachers will increase their knowledge of differentiated instructional strategies.
3. Teachers will increase their skills in instructional technology.
4. Teachers will increase their knowledge of the Indiana Standards.
5. Teachers will continue to align the curriculum with the Indiana Standards.

Professional Development Plan: Continuous Learning

The professional development plan is designed to be continuous in that a commitment is being established, a timeline is established, the plan is "embedded in practice," and the plan is structured based on the shift from traditional one-day workshops into newly identified strategies of:

- A clear, coherent strategic plan for professional development
- Combination with content-specific skills
- Individual and organizational development
- Job embedded
- School focus
- Student needs
- Teachers develop expertise

In addition, the professional development plan will incorporate best practice strategies including action research, individualized learning, mentoring, networking, peer coaching, reflective practice, study groups, and workshops. These initiatives will be supported by

the extended use of technology as a teaching and learning tool so that improved knowledge and skills resulting from professional development opportunities can be delivered and experienced in an electronic environment. Technology will:

- a) allow professional development to be accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- b) provide easy links to standards (Indiana)
- c) increase electronic communication and collaboration
- d) individualize learning
- e) provide instantaneous feedback
- f) provide opportunities for online research
- g) provide real-time access to multiple resources.

Professional Development: Time

South Spencer High School has several Professional Development opportunities scheduled for the 2024-2025 school year. This includes seven in house sessions before school and three corporation wide PD meetings from 1:00pm - 3:00pm with early dismissal for the students. The school leadership is also professionally aggressive by encouraging teachers to seek out and attend meaningful and relevant opportunities.

Professional Development: Plan

Goal #1

1. South Spencer High School will increase the focus on the Career and Technical Education program.

Strategies

- South Spencer High School teachers will be given the opportunity for regular professional development with area schools and business stakeholders as we continue to provide meaningful opportunities for our students within our Career and Technical Education program.
- South Spencer High School will partner with industry leading stakeholders to continuously improve the educational opportunities for our students.

Goal #2

2. South Spencer High School continues to reflect and update our curriculum to match current and future diploma requirements.

- South Spencer High School will continue to evaluate and adjust curriculum and course offerings to meet modern state standards.
- South Spencer High School will look for opportunities to increase dual credit classes.
- South Spencer High School will increase flexibility with curriculum and course offerings amongst staff and students as we usher in the new state diploma tracks.

Goal #3

3. South Spencer High School will increase the cultural competency of the schools' teachers, administrators, staff, parents and students.

Strategies

- South Spencer High School will encourage foreign exchange students through foreign exchange programs.

- South Spencer High School will encourage the faculty to use cross-curricular approaches for greater informational exchanges in order to learn about different aspects of various cultures.
- South Spencer High School will encourage the faculty to bring in speakers to discuss different cultures with the student body.
- South Spencer High School will work to improve cultural competency by implementing a character program.

4. South Spencer High School will continue to integrate technology in the classroom.

- South Spencer High School will investigate and educate themselves on technological trends like artificial intelligence and Chat GPT.
- South Spencer High School will use their understanding of AI to encourage our students to use it responsibly.

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