

Engagement for Success:

Implementing GLISI's Systemic Leadership Process in Baldwin County School District

Overview

Innovation/Solution/Practice at a Glance

From 2006 to the present, Superintendent Geneva Braziel has led the Baldwin County School District to embrace GLISI's suite of systemic solutions. In her roles as Curriculum and Professional Learning Director, Associate Superintendent, and since 2008, as Superintendent, Mrs. Braziel has formed a partnership with GLISI to create a culture that breeds success through well-defined leadership roles, pervasive team-based improvement, and focus on a data-driven strategic plan.

Impact at a Glance

Baldwin County's commitment to school improvement through strategic planning, and the district's strong focus on team-based improvement implemented by high-performing leaders, has increased student achievement as evidenced by the district's improved Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) status and graduation rate.

The Impact Story

Background/Context

The Baldwin County School District serves approximately 5,726 students in eight schools, one pre-school center, one early college center, three elementary schools, two middle schools and one high school. The student population is predominately African American (65%) and Caucasian (30%). Sixty-five percent (65%) of Baldwin's students are economically disadvantaged and thirteen percent (13%) are special needs students.

Baldwin County is home to Georgia College and State University and Georgia Military College, but, according to *The Georgia County Guide* less than ten percent (9.6%) of the county's residents over 25 years old had earned a Bachelor's Degree in 2000. In 2000, Baldwin County High School's graduation rate was only 45.1%.

The economic recession has impacted Baldwin County and its school system. According to Georgia Department of Labor's statistics, in January of 1990, Baldwin County had the lowest unemployment rate of any county in Georgia. The harsh reality today is that Baldwin County has the 22nd highest unemployment rate out of the 159 counties in Georgia.

Improving student achievement in a district with a high poverty level and a low level of education attainment presents substantial barriers. Baldwin County's recent AYP and graduation rate reflect the struggle of school officials and teachers to overcome the challenges they encountered as they

worked toward school improvement. In 2007, only one of the district's six schools made AYP. In addition, Baldwin County High School's 2007 graduation rate of 56.9% remained well below the state average of 72.3%.

What Was Done?

From 2006 to the present, Baldwin County has partnered with GLISI to leverage their expertise in implementing the Systemic Leadership Process, which focuses on *team-based improvement*, *talent management*, and *balanced performance improvement* work to lead to a systemic change in the district and schools.

Superintendent Braziel initiated *team-based improvement* at the district level and at the school level through the district's participation in GLISI's Base Camp and Leadership Summit™ events, which includes ongoing support by GLISI's Performance Consultants. She embedded a culture of shared leadership by initiating a district change team that cascaded to school change teams. School change teams, led by Baldwin's principals and assistant principals, engaged teachers as team members and team leaders, analyzed each school's data, and developed strategic action plans for school improvement.

Superintendent Braziel's focus on *talent management* enhanced the district's team-based improvement culture by growing Baldwin's leaders from within through consistent participation in the Oconee RESA Rising Stars Collaborative. Rising Stars participants then led teams through root cause analysis of each school's data to develop successful strategies and implement them through action research projects.

Superintendent Braziel engaged her leaders in GLISI's Power of 100 (P-100) initiative in order to support Baldwin's *talent management* work as well as their *balanced performance improvement* work. Participation in P-100's job-embedded, coach-supported learning activities served to maximize the talent of Baldwin's principals and to focus the district's leaders on a strategic plan that grew from stakeholder consensus. The district's new focus led leaders to use this experience to define its leadership positions by developing competency models and performance path plans for key positions, and performer path plans for key individuals. Each principal works closely with a GLISI-trained Leadership Preparation Performance Coach (LPPC) to receive guidance and support while working through their individualized performer path plan. In order to model the process to her staff, Superintendent Braziel focused her own performer path plan on the development of the system's strategic plan and Balanced Scorecard.

The district-level strategic plan and Balanced Scorecard has been cascaded to every school in the district. A district-level data room and school-level data rooms reflect Baldwin County's Balanced Scorecard and are constantly updated to monitor progress toward meeting the district's school improvement goals. The mission of the district, **Educate to Graduate**, has become part of the school district's logo, and more importantly, has become the rallying cry for the community.

The Baldwin County community enthusiastically supports the Baldwin County School District's mission and strategic plan for improvement. With considerable effort from the district, community stakeholders have become part of the strategic planning process and now their efforts to improve

the county's schools are more closely aligned with the district's strategies. Stakeholders such as parents, business partners, and civic organizations offer services and financial support to promote the district's outreach to students and parents.

In summary, Baldwin County School District is led by high-performing instructional leaders who are committed to *team-based improvement*, *talent management*, and *balanced performance improvement*. A balanced and systemic plan for improvement has been developed by the district's change team in collaboration with community stakeholders. School-level improvement plans, aligned with the district improvement plan, have also been developed by school change teams. School district personnel and community stakeholders are focused on the district's strategic plan and Balanced Scorecard so everyone is now part of the solution to ensure Baldwin County School District achieves its mission of **Educate to Graduate**.

What were the Results?

As Superintendent Braziel reflected on the district's challenges and progress, she said,

We are committed to being administrators who are instructional leaders. We realized that we needed to build and implement our own strategic plan – so we took our work with GLISI, and we put it into action. We asked ourselves, 'What is our purpose; why do we exist?' We worked as a team to establish our focus which is to ensure that all of our students graduate ready for productive futures.

Superintendent Braziel stated further,

GLISI gave us a better understanding of what school improvement is about. Now, our school improvement efforts are aligned and monitored with our Balanced Scorecard. We no longer perform random acts of improvement. School improvement is a team effort that engages our community, our district and school-level leaders, our teachers, and our support personnel such as the Transportation Director and the Finance Director. Our decisions are data-driven, and all of us are focused on the same goals.

The district has been rewarded for its implementation of GLISI's suite of systemic solutions (*team-based improvement*, *talent management*, and *balanced performance improvement*) with significant changes in the district's approach to problem-solving and stakeholder engagement as well student achievement gains.

What was the Impact?

Baldwin County's commitment to school improvement through strategic planning, monitored implementation, and team-based improvement implemented by high-performing leaders has improved student achievement. This is evidenced by the district's AYP status change. In 2007, only one of six schools made AYP. In 2008, only two schools failed to make AYP, and in 2009, only one school fell short. Although Baldwin High School did not meet the AYP standard in 2008 and 2009, the school met AYP criteria in eight (8) out of nine (9) categories including Math and

English/Language Arts GHSGT for all students and subgroups, demonstrating an improvement over previous years.

The school district's mission is to increase the graduation rate. In 2003, Baldwin's graduation rate was 45.1% and in 2007, it was still low at 56.9%. By 2008, the graduation rate had climbed to 75.4% and by 2009 to 79.9%, now above the state's graduation rate. District and school-level leaders attribute this improvement to team-based strategic planning, implementation and progress monitoring.

Baldwin County Schools AYP Status

School	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Blandy Hills Elementary (K-5)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Creekside Elementary (K-5)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Eagle Ridge Elementary (Davis) (K-5)	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
Midway Elementary (K-5)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Oak Hill Middle School (6-8)	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Baldwin County High School	No	No	No	No	No	No

Baldwin County High School Graduation Rate Status

School	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Baldwin County High School	45.1%	54.8%	55.2%	58.3%	56.9%	75.4%	79.9%

Next Steps

The Baldwin County School District has achieved organizational effectiveness through the district's immersion in GLISI's systemic leadership process. Shared leadership, focusing on common goals and monitoring progress toward meeting those goals, is the way the district now conducts business. District and school-level leaders will continue to refine their focus on curriculum, assessment and, instruction until they reach the district's ultimate goal of a graduation rate of 100%.