Rockford’s Pathway to Transformation

The Consortium for Educational Change (CEC) frames its work with districts and schools as an interplay between “inside-out” and “outside-in.” The meaning and purpose behind the work starts from the inside, holding student learning and empowerment at its very heart, and moves outward through the circles that support that core purpose. The method and mechanism of the work begins with collaborative commitment at the very highest levels of the district and works inward on a pathway that focuses on collaboration and capacity-building.

The CEC Pathway is an essential component of the work in Rockford, work that is transforming a challenging urban district with a culture of mistrust and poor performance into one focused on collaboration, professional learning and continuous improvement.
| Labor-Management Relationships | CEC in living its mission, vision, and core values strives to improve relationships between labor and management within a district. CEC believes that if relationships between labor and management are not strong, collaborative and healthy, change cannot occur. All transformation work begins with the culture and fostering trust, respect, communication and collaboration.  

**In Rockford:** A strong collaborative relationship between the superintendent and union leaders, developed over the last four years, provides opportunities for voice and input into decisions, and a mutual understanding of the rationale for decisions. |
| Interest-Based Bargaining | CEC, in collaboration with the Illinois Education Association (IEA), provides training and coaching in Interest-Based Bargaining (IBB), an approach that seeks to reach collective bargaining agreements that honor the mutual interests of both labor and management/board. Preparation in IBB strategies and techniques is available to individuals from both labor and management who wish to be trainers and facilitators of IBB.  

**In Rockford:** Successful contract negotiations were conducted in 2015 using IBB, and the stakeholders continue to use interest-based strategies as they monitor the contract’s implementation. |
| Memorandum of Understanding | CEC works with a district’s contract management team to establish a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that outlines topics for further study, providing a structure for collaborative teams of management, union, and school board to explore solutions and areas of mutual interest between contract negotiation sessions.  

**In Rockford:** The Board of Education and the Rockford Education Association (REA) entered into an MOU designed to encourage and support the study of key interests that were unresolved during contract talks. |
| Data Measurement System | CEC trains district, school and team leaders how to align SMART Goals and targets vertically throughout the district, at every level from superintendent to central office to principals to teachers to students, to ensure that everyone in the district is “pulling the oars in the same direction” and accountability is shared across every level.

**In Rockford:** A steering committee, working closely with SMART Learning Systems (SLS), meets regularly to monitor progress based on clear indicators and stakeholder surveys. |
| --- | --- |
| System Assessment | CEC offers an intensive, on-site auditing process (see p. 9) that includes interviews with stakeholders and an extensive review of evidence, and allows school and district teams to reflect on how the system assessment validates or contradicts their own self-assessment data. This process identifies overall strengths and opportunities as well as next-step suggestions, with a focus on learning, collaboration, and results.

**In Rockford:** Rockford conducted a district-wide system self-assessment benchmarked against rigorous continuous improvement criteria. An external team used this assessment and other data to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement. |
| SWOT Analysis | CEC assists districts in analyzing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) using trend, cohort, comparative and subgroup data aligned to its scorecard or data system to understand current needs and establish priorities for improvement.

**In Rockford:** SWOT analysis was a driver in the strategic planning process, identifying urgent issues that needed to be addressed to move the district to a higher level of performance. |
| Stakeholder Satisfaction Surveys | CEC assists districts and schools in aligning their student, family and staff satisfaction surveys to the districts’ long-range strategic goals, which might include achievement, learning environment, resources, family and community engagement, labor-management collaboration, and others. The perception data gathered from these surveys allows for deep understanding of stakeholder needs and drives improvement.

**In Rockford:** Rockford administers the state of Illinois’ 5 Essential Satisfaction Surveys annually to students, families and staff. |
| SMART District and School Surveys | SMART Learning Systems, in partnership with CEC, uses surveys to generate a perceptual measure of district-level leadership capacity in the areas of organization, systems, and shared responsibility, and school-level leadership capacity in the areas of school improvement process, focus, and school-wide collaboration.

**In Rockford:** Rockford monitors and tracks the results of both district and school-level SMART surveys. |
| Strategic Planning | CEC offers a research-based strategic planning process (see p. 10) that incorporates stakeholder feedback, data analysis, and understanding of state and federal requirements to develop a measurable, timely, long-range strategic plan with widespread buy-in that includes accountability for results.  

**In Rockford:** Rockford updated its long-range strategic plan during the 2014-2015 school year, and the plan drives the district’s strategic direction and aligns school improvement plans. (See p. 8) |
| Common Mission and Vision | CEC helps districts and schools describe, communicate and embody their particular mission and vision, including carefully thinking through what this will look like over the five years of a strategic planning cycle.  

**In Rockford:** Rockford is aligning its vision to its scorecard, and is putting a system in place that monitors and reports against annual indicators of growth and attainment. |
| Long-Range Goals, Indicators, Measures and Targets | CEC uses a SMART approach to help districts establish key long-range goals aligned to indicators of standards or skills, measures of progress towards the goals, and short-term incremental targets.  

**In Rockford:** Rockford is defining SMART goals, indicators, measures and targets and setting up a data system throughout the organization so that everyone knows how their work contributes to the improvement of the district and schools. |
| SMART Action Plans | In partnership with SMART Learning Systems, CEC helps districts develop results-oriented action plans that integrate student, teacher, and leader performance goals, and follow a Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle. (See p. 11)  

**In Rockford:** Rockford consistently uses the Plan-Do-Study-Act process to set goals and monitor and track actions. |
| SMART Measurement System | CEC helps districts and schools establish a scorecard or dashboard system that aligns various sources of data to monitor and report progress toward key indicators, measures, and targets aligned to the district or school’s improvement goals.  

**In Rockford:** Rockford is developing both an external scorecard to share performance data with stakeholders and an internal dashboard to formatively monitor and track performance at the department and school levels, informed by the SMART Measurement System from SLS. |
### SMART School Improvement Plans

In partnership with CEC, SMART Learning Systems leads districts through a five-step research based process to develop a consistent structure and process for school improvement that is aligned with the district’s strategic plan and connects school improvement efforts to PLCS, classrooms, and students.

**In Rockford:** Rockford has trained school leadership teams made up of the principal and five teacher representatives. Additionally, CEC and SLS provide coaching support to all school leadership teams.

### SMART School Progress Monitoring

CEC offers a data monitoring process for SMART School Improvement Process cycles at school and team levels, with Fall, Winter and Spring Data Reports and a culminating Data Retreat where teams develop new SMART Goals and targets for the following Fall.

**In Rockford:** Rockford has established consistency in both the improvement process and the cycle timelines and CEC is assisting the district as it improves its Internal Peer School Review process to ensure fidelity of implementation.

### Distributed Leadership Model (DLT, SLT, PLC)

CEC works with union and district leadership, teachers, administrators, and board members to build collaborative structures and processes at the district, school, and classroom level to implement school transformation and drive instructional improvement. CEC uses a distributed leadership model that aligns the work of the Board of Education, a District Leadership Team (DLT), School Leadership Teams (SLTs) and teacher-led teams (PLCs).

**In Rockford:** Rockford has established a new District Leadership Team structure and is in the process of aligning it with School Leadership Teams.

### Professional Learning Community (PLC) Grade Level/Department Teams

CEC trains and coaches districts and schools in the PLC philosophy and helps them implement a PLC model that is embedded at all levels of the school system, from district to school to teacher teams, and is centered around collaborative use of data to inform and improve instruction.

**In Rockford:** Rockford is currently providing training and assistance to principals to support PLC work and studying ways to increase both time and professional learning for teams.
| SMART Improvement Process | In partnership with SMART Learning Systems, CEC offers school and teacher team-level SMART Goal training to provide the skills and techniques needed to have SMART Goals drive instructional improvement.  
**In Rockford:** Rockford has invested in training for all 47 schools, and is providing post-training support with a cadre of internal trainers and coaches. |
| Common Instructional Practices | CEC provides effective practices/standards-based professional learning for educators on topics such as using question formulation techniques, understanding text structures, and literacy design collaboration.  
**In Rockford:** Rockford is assisting school teams to embrace research-based instructional practices that have a high impact on student learning and is identifying development of common unit plan instruction as one of its critical strategic plan strategies. |
| Leadership the SMART Way | In partnership with CEC, SMART Learning Systems provides foundational training and support to ensure a culture for improvement through Leadership the SMART Way, which helps districts establish a climate that fosters change, growth and improvement.  
**In Rockford:** After decades of mistrust between the district and teachers, Rockford’s recent staff survey indicates that over 80% of teachers feel the district is headed in the right direction. |
| Curriculum, Assessment and Instruction | CEC provides training on how to take unpacked standards and repack them into units of instruction, including critical unit components such as essential questions, unit targets, key vocabulary, differentiation and instructional practices. CEC provides training on practices that involve students in the assessment process, and incorporates Illinois’ Social-Emotional Learning Standards.  
**In Rockford:** CEC is assisting Rockford teachers with unpacking standards, establishing essential learning outcomes for each unit of instruction, and formulating common assessments. |
| Instructional Council | CEC supports the creation of collaborative instruction-focused structures to ensure teacher voices are a key element of curriculum, assessment, and instructional improvement.  
**In Rockford:** CEC facilitates Rockford’s Instructional Council, which oversees strategic action planning around learning outcomes, engages teachers in developing common assessments, and ensures that social emotional learning and differentiated instruction are incorporated in all instructional planning. |
| **Teacher Evaluation / Student Growth** | CEC provides training and coaching to schools seeking to comply with Illinois’s Performance Evaluation Review Act (PERA) statute, which requires the creation of joint labor-management committees to craft and agree upon teacher evaluation criteria. CEC focuses in particular on melding adherence to PERA requirements with effective research-based practices.  
**In Rockford:** Rockford is addressing the new PERA requirements and is in the process of exploring new ways of aligning student growth to both teacher and leader performance. |
| **Peer Assistance Review** | CEC helps districts develop jointly managed school-union Peer Assistance Review (PAR) programs that provide mentoring and evaluation by expert teachers, providing a clear pathway for ineffective tenured teachers to improve their practice and key support for early-career educators.  
**In Rockford:** The PAR program has been very successful in ensuring quality instruction for students. |
| **Social Emotional Learning** | CEC supports the thoughtful inclusion of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in a district’s strategic plan, with the knowledge that the best learning emerges in the context of supportive relationships that make learning challenging, engaging and meaningful.  
**In Rockford:** Rockford’s strategic plan addresses the need “to improve the social emotional curriculum to address student behaviors and engagement.” |
| **Living The Strategic Plan** | CEC supports districts as they seek to “live the strategic plan” by aligning the plan with school improvement plans, budgetary resources, and leader and teacher evaluation processes, as well as by establishing a data scorecard and dashboard progress monitoring system.  
**In Rockford:** Rockford’s district administration, from the superintendent level out to the schools, is working hard to implement the plan with fidelity. |
| **Principal Support Systems** | CEC supports the development of quality principal support systems, formulated with the participation of principals, and including targeted professional development, effective feedback, and networking opportunities for principals both inside and outside the district.  
**In Rockford:** Rockford principals are engaged with district leaders in developing and implementing a support system for principals. |
Rockford Public Schools Strategic Plan

**Vision**
Collaboratively engage all students in a world class education.

Be the first choice for all families.

**Mission**

**Goals**

1. Growth & Achievement
   - Curriculum Alignment
   - Differentiated Instruction

2. Engaging Partnerships
   - Customer Service

3. Optimal Climate
   - Social Emotional Health & Skills
   - Facilities & Technology

4. Quality Staff
   - Internal Trust & Relationships
   - Recruit & Develop
   - Monitor, Track & Report

5. Fiscal & Operational Stewardship
   - Resource Allocation

**Motto**
Shaping Tomorrow Today

**Values**
Achievement • Student Responsibility • Community Partners • Diversity • Safety • Continuous Improvement • Staff • High Expectations • Community Resources • Stewardship
CEC’s System Assessment Process

System Assessment is a key CEC process to improve district/school performance through the integration of a Continuous Improvement Framework. Designed to accelerate CEC, district, and school learning, the System Assessment is a systematic method of organizational self-study, written assessment, site visits, and collaboratively written feedback based on a continuous improvement model that integrates the Baldrige Performance Excellence Criteria with the characteristics of a Professional Learning Community.

The System Assessment involves:

- A **self-study** in the use of research-based, effective practices of high performing organizations. The self-study involves responding to key questions aligned to the effective practices.

- A **self-assessment** of the district or school, identifying the level of implementation of those practices across every school at the district level and every classroom at the school level. The self-assessment is a measure of execution of the effective practices.

- An **external team review** of the self-study and assessment with a multi-day site visit to the district or school. The team interviews stakeholders and examines evidence to provide an external look at the district or school’s self-study. It identifies district or school strengths as well as opportunities for improvement, and helps celebrate success and set priorities on the work left to be done.

- An **oral report** is given at the conclusion of the visit that provides an overview of the external team’s findings. The oral report is followed by written reports that identify strengths and opportunities for improvement that align to the research-based effective practices and differences between the self-assessment and the external assessment. The report serves a springboard for the district for strategic planning, or for the school for school improvement planning.
# Top Ten Reasons to Use CEC’s Strategic Planning Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Reason</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>One page plan with supporting documents keeps it “big and simple.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Includes alignment with new federal and state requirements.</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Sets direction for operational action planning.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Defines commitments and non-negotiables.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Defines what we all need to do well together.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Sets clear focus and priorities.</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Determines gaps between current performance (where we are) and preferred future performance (where we want to be).</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Includes stakeholder participation to ensure collaboration and ownership.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Defines how we measure success through goals, indicators, measures and targets.</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Ensures a process that <strong>brings the plan to life.</strong></td>
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The SMART School Improvement Process

SMART School Improvement Process

Step #1: Isolate need
Step #2: Create school SMART goal
Step #3: Select strategies
Step #4: Develop action plans
Step #5: Analyze and refocus

Where do we want to be?
Where are we now?

Between Steps
Between Steps
Between Steps
Begin again!
Implement plans
Explore professional learning options!
Investigate effective practices

How will we get to where we want to be?

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