

**1248: Leadership and Assessment:
Using Formative Assessments to
Facilitate Learning Communities
In your School.**

**ASCD Reinventing Schools:
Courageous Leadership
For Positive Change
New Orleans, La.
March 22, 2008**

**JAMES MADISON HIGH SCHOOL
AND
THOREAU MIDDLE SCHOOL**

**Two schools - One Journey
the transformation into a
Professional Learning Community**

Knowing Doing Gap...

“Why does knowledge of what needs to be done so frequently fail to result in action or behavior that is consistent with that knowledge” (Pfeffer and Sutton, p.4)



LEARNING BY DOING

“Capacity building...is not just workshops and professional development for all.

It is the daily habit of working together, and you can't learn this from a workshop or course.

You need to learn it by doing it and having mechanisms for getting better at it on purpose.”

Michael Fullan

OUR NORMS FOR TODAY

- Set aside pre-conceived notions
- Share experiences
- Ask questions
- Respect each others point of view
- Be open minded
- We hope to provide some useful “takeaways”

ALWAYS IMPROVING... WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

- Would you want to go to a doctor who was not current in the latest medical research or a lawyer who was not up on the most recent court decisions?
- We should ensure that our most precious resource...our children...are being sent to educators who are current in research based best practices.
- Members of a PLC are always researching and applying their new knowledge of best practices to improved student learning.



IF 99.9% IS GOOD ENOUGH, THEN...

- > 12 newborns will be given the wrong parents daily
- > 20,000 incorrect drug prescriptions will be written this year
- > 315 entries in *Webster's Dictionary* will be misspelled
- > 2 planes landing at Chicago's airport will be unsafe every day



TELL ME HOW TO START THE CONVERSATION IF...

your child or grandchild was the .01%? Would you say that's OK, everyone else passed so they must be doing it right.



IS EVERYTHING OK?



CRAFT KNOWLEDGE VS. CONTENT KNOWLEDGE

- ✦ Must focus on improving our craft through...
 - + PLC Meetings
 - + Professional Literacy
 - + Focused staff development
 - + Professional Conferences



Rarely does improving content knowledge leverage student achievement as much as craft knowledge.

EXPECT DIFFERENT RESULTS

- Members of a PLC understand that unless they do things differently there is no reason to expect different or improved results.
- If you do the same thing you've always done, you will get the same thing you've always got.
- What are you doing differently?



WHY CHANGE IF IT'S WORKING?

Could it be done better or differently with better results?



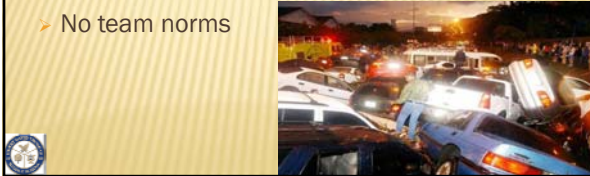
WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU REALLY LOOK AT THE DATA?

Don't we all have achievement gap issues? These are the kids we absolutely must reach!



HOW ABOUT THOSE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES THAT WE BELIEVE EXIST. WHAT DO WE PRETEND THAT OUR TEACHERS ARE DOING? (2002-04)

- Teachers were good individually but did not function as a working PLC
- Common assessments were not widespread or highly utilized, misunderstanding of formative assessment
- No team norms



- At risk interventions needed to be structured and data driven, haphazard at best
- Teachers did not even have the same homework or grading policy
- There were no resources for teachers to get PLC information
- No common pacing so discussions for common content being taught was difficult
- There was no direct focus for the time created for PLC's



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IS THIS POSSIBLE?

“TWO STUDENTS IN THE SAME SUBJECT WITH CLASSES RIGHT NEXT DOOR TO EACH OTHER COULD HAVE COMPLETELY DIFFERENT GRADING STRUCTURES WITH DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS...CLEARLY A CHILD'S GRADE COULD BE DETERMINED BY WHO THEY HAD, NOT WHAT THEY LEARNED.”



How could this happen?

THE JOURNEY BEGINS...INITIAL STEPS...ALWAYS BE STRATEGIC!

Getting key leaders on board... who are they?



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THE NON-NEGOTIABLES

- Create team norms
- Meet regularly
- Have a common syllabus
- Develop homework and grading policies that focus on learning
- Have all students within the same academic discipline learning similar content at the same time...Pacing



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MOST IMPORTANT FOR GETTING SCHOOLS MOVING...(TRUST)

- Have teachers create common assessments around our state standards...this was the most vital step for us and really the key aspect of reshaping our culture
- Find some common ground where teachers can develop a high level of **TRUST**. (Who? All stakeholders)



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WHAT CAN YOU AFFORD?\$\$\$

A Tiered approach...from tremendous school financial investment to no financial investment.



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RESOURCES...

All teachers have access to resources: for example...

- Getting Started
- Professional Learning Communities at Work
- Whatever it Takes
- Good to Great*
- Classroom Instruction That Works*
- A Framework for Understanding Poverty
- Building Background Knowledge*
- Learning by Doing*
- Test Better, Teach Better*

PLC leaders tasked with leading book talks



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HOW THOREAU FOCUSED ON THE ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS...

- What do we want our students to know...which we based on our state standards of learning
- How will we know if and when they have learned it...we developed a comprehensive formative assessment design to specifically answer this question
- What do we do if they have/have not learned the material...we put a wide variety of strategic interventions in place along with a specific strategy for enrichment



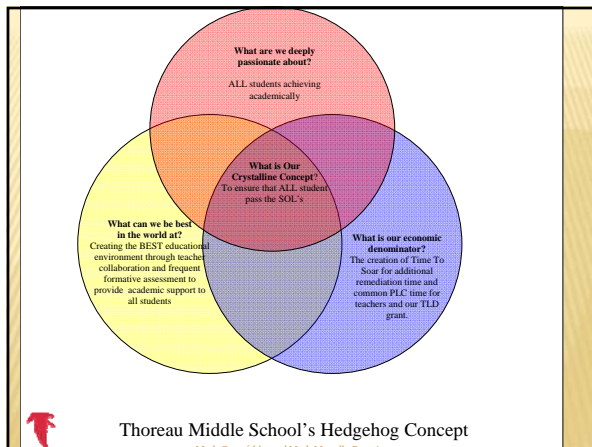
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HOW MADISON FOCUSED ON ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS?

- Establish faculty work groups to determine mission , vision, values.
- Develop grade level curriculum teams to produce common curriculum.
- Develop common assessments (4 then 8)
- Establish weekly meeting time that is non-negotiable. Most important.
- Require feedback and products by teams.



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MADISON HEDGEHOG...

- Must get all students additional **TIME** and **SUPPORT**.
- Time becomes the variable.
- Assessment becomes a leverage strategy



THE POWER OF COMMON ASSESSMENTS

“One of the most powerful strategies for closing the knowing-doing gap and making progress on the road to a PLC is ensuring every collaborative team develops frequent, timely formative assessments.” (that is, in-process measurements)

Rick DuFour



WHAT IS YOUR SCHOOL DOING ABOUT YOUR ASSESSMENT PRACTICES?

- How do you assess student learning?
- Do you really...REALLY know what your students are accountable for on high stakes tests?
- Do you work with colleagues to create test questions based on the standards which your students are required to know?
- Do you analyze the results of your students' assessments with your colleagues, then figure out how YOU can adapt your teaching strategies to get more students to learn?



ASSESSMENT WAS THE LINK THAT BROUGHT US TOGETHER

- What do we want our students to know?
- Teachers worked within their PLC teams to create assessment items based on the essential knowledge of state standards
- They built a databank of questions
- Built for teachers by teachers!!! (**MOST IMPORTANT IDEA**)



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THE MOVE...FROM SUMMATIVE TO FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT

- There are lots of definitions and you can debate this topic for days
- Thoreau Middle School's definition:
- "If we use the data in a timely manner to refine teaching practices and improve student learning, it is formative."

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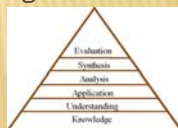
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WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- Created an online formative assessment tool in collaboration with Northrop Grumman
- Teachers trained at PLC conferences and now deliver our own PLC training
- Building our culture
- Keeping the focus on student learning
- Keeping the focus on adult learning



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ASPIRE

- formative assessment data bank
- User friendly
- Easy for both teachers and students
- Immediate feedback for teachers and students

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ASPIRE (CONT.)

- Teacher created
- Aligned to state standards
- Both formative and summative
- Forces consistent pacing
- Identifies at-risk students early

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ASSESSMENT ACTION PLAN

- How could you improve assessment in your building?
- How can you help facilitate the building of a PLC culture using common assessments as a starting point?
- Can you be open and honest with colleagues and discuss your teaching practices to promote formative assessment discussions?



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MADISON: TIME AND SUPPORT...(ZERO COST)

1. SAP Period- 35 minutes daily for students
2. Common Planning for teachers
3. Systematic schoolwide support
4. Three tiered intervention system



WHAT DO YOU THINK A HIGH PERFORMING PLC MEETING WOULD LOOK LIKE?



OUR MEETINGS MIGHT LOOK LIKE THE FOLLOWING

- > Using Student Data to Guide Decisions
- > Developing Common Assessments
- > Looking at Student Work
- > Looking at Teacher Work
- > Item Analysis/Error Analysis
- > Developing Team SMART Goals
- > Book talk discussions
- > Using time for instructional walk-through of a colleague
- > Rubric scoring of writing assignment by the team



WHAT DOES NATIONAL RESEARCH SAY MAKES GREAT SCHOOLS ACROSS THE COUNTRY?



THE RESEARCH SAYS GREAT SCHOOLS...

- Are *not* defined by demographics...they are found in urban, suburban, and rural areas
- Are *not* defined by number or quality of programs...they contain no programs uniformly identified as clearly superior to others



THE RESEARCH SAYS GREAT SCHOOLS...

- *are not* limited by highly diverse student populations...they exist in communities challenged by limited English language abilities as well as those in poverty.
- *do not* have teachers that are clearly better or more effective than other schools...their staffs look similar to all schools



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WHAT DOES MAKE A GREAT SCHOOL?



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THE RESEARCH SAYS


IN GREAT SCHOOLS...

- ✗ Beliefs are made explicit
- ✗ Student learning is the focus
- ✗ Decisions are data-driven
- ✗ Adults collaborate and model learning
- ✗ Successful school cultures celebrate success
- ✗ Leadership is distributed

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ALL KIDS CAN LEARN!

Do all of our teachers really believe this?
How do we know?



ALL KIDS CAN LEARN...

- We must believe this
- We must be passionate about this
- We must be the ambassadors for creating this environment for our students
- We must ensure the schools we are charged with leading believe and embody this

Mark and Mark



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FOCUS ON COLLABORATION: THE BARRIERS

“The challenge facing leaders in creating a collaborative culture is not in creating the teams, but rather in providing the focus, time, support, and parameters critical to effective teamwork.”

Getting Started



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THE PLC: WHAT DOES IT DO FOR YOUR SCHOOL?

- Creates Both a **common language** and **framework** within your school
- Facilitates a **data-driven process** that leads to a **results-oriented product**: high student achievement for all students
- Creates a culture and a vehicle for **collaboration** to share expertise and push best practice



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“I wonder how many children’s lives might be saved if we educators disclosed what we know to each other.”

Roland Barth



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**WE ALL REALLY KNOW WHAT TO DO...WHY
AREN'T WE DOING IT?**



“It’s easy to get good players.
Getting ‘em to play together...
that’s the hard part.”

Casey Stengel



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THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

Good luck on your
journey!



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