

FA PLC Notes July 15, 2014

Today's Topic: Using formative assessment data in elementary schools to inform instruction—teacher and principal perspectives

Attendees:

Barbara Bracco-Panelist, Preschool teacher at Cliffside Park, NJ
Kathleen Dering –Panelist, Principal at Elliott Elementary School and
Melanie—Panelist, first-grade teacher at Elliott Elementary School
Shelly Andrews, WY
Wynette Howard, ID
Jeanie Iberlin, WY
Penny Milburn, IA
Geri Mohler, CA
Nick Ortiz, CO
Sue Reed, ME
Ivy Starns, LA
Lucy Trautman, OK
Lori Connors-Tadros, CEELO
Melissa Dahlin, CEELO
Jana Martella, CEELO
Jim Squires, CEELO

Key Takeaways:

There are many challenges to using assessment effectively and implementing it in a way that can benefit staff and children most. Some challenges include lacking resources, such as time for professional development and meeting; and lacking district support for cross-grade or cross-school meetings. Yet a carefully implemented, well-supported plan can change school culture to support effectively using formative assessment, and once the system is in place, the culture can support its ongoing growth even in the absence of some resources (such as funding).

Deeper Dive Notes:

Barbara:

Cliffside Park uses district-developed assessments at beginning of school, year, First on numbers 1-20 letter recognition upper and lower case, plus ESI screening to check for

early intervention. If they don't pass early screening inventory, we wait 6 weeks and check again. If there's no progression we usually call a child study team meeting.

In the fall, we set goals as a teaching team, using TS GOLD for the first time. Trained ourselves, haven't had much time to implement deeply. Will take it a step further this year.

Checklist with parents, suggestions on what they can do at home. Meet again with families in February.

Teaching teams work together to plan activities. This year, plan to get the families more involved. Piloting Kindergarten KEA; will help to track child progress.

Administrative support: very supportive but no money for training, 1-day PD. Not a full-day program. 2:15 per day, 18 children in the morning, 18 in the afternoon. Hard to administer ESI, baseline, so used GOLD only twice.

Background: Administrator is an EC advocate. Opened program in 2000 with full-day preschool in each of 4 buildings + special education classrooms. District rented a building and put all preschools and K together. About 9 classrooms; then lost funding. Now at 6 half-day pre-Ks and 4 special needs classes. Used to be ELLI district, very transient community, most of children stay to 4th grade then move on. Mix of incomes, at least 30-40% FRPL.

Melanie:

During the summer we find time to meet and focus on state standards and pick Power Standards for the school year. Then pick short-term and long-term Smart Goals. When we meet we talk about what do we want to do and what are we looking at. We meet weekly to discuss what we need to do for the kids. We also have monitor meetings where we look at where students are at the time and do we need to make adjustments to what we're doing.

We draw from other experts and include them in meetings periodically too (e.g. reading specialists). Bring data already analyzed; look at each individual student to see what they're missing. Group them into 4 different categories and that's how we plan next meetings. Pre-teaching, re-teaching, extra practice for middle group, for example.

How families are involved: Put results in hallway, plus grade-level nights. First grade math night to focus on Power Standards, families come and focus on activities. First grade: newsletters and quarterly celebrations. Focus on reading and math so parents know what is being studied.

Kathleen:

How do you provide supervision and space so there is time to plan etc?

History: Elliott, 4 years ago was named a school with consistently low achievement, got an enormous School Improvement Grant (SIG), \$3M over 3 years. As part of that, took an intensive look at every element of the school: Time on Task, transition, student engagement, parent-family involvement. Every piece of the school day and curriculum were intensively focused on. Plus work with data team, and with the Lead and Learn Center. Began intensive development on good teaching and what it looks like, plus the data team. We planned how to meet as frequently as we do. The whole district is moving in that direction, but EES is at forefront in terms of frequency of data team meeting time. At that time teachers were compensated financially, because we had the grant—they meet weekly but SIG money had run out. Teachers had learned of the benefit and efficiency of the data teams, the value of teams and the work. Their commitment to continuing remained.

Space: Each grade level uses one of the grade-level classrooms. Non-grade-level teachers divided up in areas that make sense.

We understand it is a work in progress that will never end. We understand it's important and will make a huge difference.

Coming year? Need to continue with all of the pieces that started 4 years ago, even without the money. Want to stay on all the elements + ratios of interaction etc. Instructional coach and behavioral coach provide data on classroom environment based on: [High Impact Instruction](#) out of Lawrence, Kansas.

Plan to continue on current path making sure we become more efficient every year. Make sure we choose the most appropriate strategies for each of learning groups: Proficient, Close to proficient, Far from proficient. Draw on each other and as many resources as we can to make sure they're getting most from instruction.

Getting new teachers on board: 4 years ago at 50% turnover after the year; 3 years, 50%; 26% in 2 years. What happened, 3 administrative changes during that time also.

Ended up with a core group of teachers amazingly committed to the work despite administrative and collegial changes. Turnover is a very tough thing for a building to succeed in: trying to build a culture, it's hard to bring everyone up to speed quickly enough. Core group of teachers were instrumental in keeping the culture moving in the direction it needed to.

Questions:

Elliott: **Background on Power Standard Process and Goal Setting?**

We go through Nebraska State Standards and figure out what we think is most important for kids in K and 1st grade; want them to be able to comprehend text and fiction retelling. Focused on that, this year we'll add nonfiction retelling. Each year pick 2-3 for reading and 2-3 for math. Discussed with each other why one would be a priority.

For long-term smart goals looked at what we wanted them to be able to do by end of year, for example, double digit addition with regrouping. What do we need to do for short-term to reach long-term goal? E.g. single-digit.

Is anyone using the data team structure on a regular basis using time to review data to inform instruction? For preschool or early elementary?

Barbara: We have grade-level meetings once per month on half-days for children. Review data and goals, and how children are fitting into that. Sometimes combine preschool and K.

Kathleen: District provides early release once per month for all elementary teachers: 1.5 hours per month. High school data teams have 1 hour every Tuesday of school year. Now it's just part of culture, but there has to be district support for process and PD because it's so intensive. We've been working on it for 5+ years and we know we're not where we want it to be.

Also bring in [Steve Ventura](#) each year for a workshop K-12, with 3-4 reps from every school in the 40K school district.

Range of experiences in terms of how states and districts are working together to support teachers in programs.