

## Collaboration within district

One of the imperatives given in *It's Time* is about Instruction and Assessment. These areas in particular depend on collaboration between teachers, teachers and administrators, schools, and all grade levels. Specifically, the following are highlighted:

### Instructional and Formative Assessment Practices

Under this topic, the authors of TIME make the strong statement that “Planning should not be done in isolation.” (TIME, p. 28). When teachers plan their lessons completely on their own, this leads to the very real likelihood of having teachers of the same grade level go off into directions with their instruction. This is not to say that every lesson should be identical; rather, there should be some amount of collaboration so that teachers can “calibrate” their instruction and know they are heading in about the same direction.

In my particular district, where grades K - 5 have a single teacher per grade level in each of 3 different buildings, an isolation is forced on the teachers. I have worked to combat this in various ways. Last year, through a federal grant we were able to use funds to hire subs so that I could have day long grade level meetings with each set teachers. We did this in January, March, and May, so that through the spring we had regular contact and discussion about the content they were teaching.

This year, my current plan is to host grade span meetings after school for grades K - 2, 3 - 5, 6 - 8, and 9 - 12. This will have less success due to the fact that this will be a volunteer activity - we cannot require teachers to attend these meetings. However, it does give an opportunity for some of that collaboration.

### Instructional Materials and Resources

The selection of instructional materials is an important area of collaboration. Although I do not believe that teachers have to “teach the program”, or “follow the textbook” exclusively, I DO believe, especially in our district with different K - 5 schools, that there is value in having a common core program. This allows for similar pacing throughout the year, and a similar framework that teachers build their instruction around. But to mandate a program to teachers often ends up dooming the implementation. As such, the recommendation to “Involve Teachers in the Selection of Instructional Resources Aligned with the CCSSM” (TIME p. 35) is an important recommendation to follow.

In my particular case, we are having conversations about transitioning to the new Illustrative Mathematics materials as they become available. Last spring I met with the middle school teachers, and on one of our grade level (really, grade span for them) meetings, we

explored the materials more closely and they expressed a willingness to use them. I have also talked with the high school teachers about using the new materials when they come out and have received favorable responses from all of them.

What remains is to have the conversation with the K - 5 staff about changing in a few years when the K - 5 materials come out. This is something that will be happening in the next year or two.

## Student Support Structures and Intensification Strategies

Student support structures requires collaboration at the very least between all members of a school, as well as between teachers and administrators. From creating extended class times, to providing extra help outside the classroom (TIME p. 77), these strategies require collaboration to adjust school schedules and create blocks of additional time.

I am on the Leadership Team for one of our K - 5 schools that is working with the state this year to develop an RtI program. My plan is to continue working with this project throughout the year, and then being a resource for RtI for the other schools in the district, and work with them to help develop an effective program.

## Summative Assessment Data

In order for teachers to be able to effectively use summative assessment data, it requires that they become comfortable accessing data and interpreting what they find. To that end, earlier this year I provided the K - 8 staff a 3 hour workshop on an early release day to take them into looking at district wide NWEA data by their grade levels. This workshop was well received, and became the impetus for principal's to have a protocol to use within their own data teams. One principal has asked me to assist with his data team by helping them learn how to access NWEA data of various natures.

In order for these data teams to be successful, it requires that teachers work together, and it requires a high degree of trust. It is very difficult for teachers to look at data from their students, and it is particularly difficult to look at it with other teachers or administrators. By establishing a collaborative relationship between staff, we can open the doors for some valuable conversations about data and improving instruction.