Southeast Polk Community Schools
PLC Application Response
4.1.20

1. **Frequency of assessments:**
   The application states that locally developed pre/post assessments are administered every 6 weeks. Is that time frame a local decision? Is gathering data every 6 weeks frequent enough to allow teams to monitor student progress? Research published by Bangent-Drowns, Kulik & Kulik, 1991, (and reported in Marzano, The Art and Science of Teaching, 2007) suggests there are benefits to a shorter cycle – say every 3 weeks. Has there been any discussion of tightening the feedback cycle created by the assessments?

We began the six week assessment cycle as a structure for looking at data to make instructional decisions. As a result, teams began to notice just exactly what you mentioned in your feedback--they were finding this to be too long of a time period on data collection to inform instruction. Many teams will write a mid-point common formative assessment as they are analyzing the pre-test data to align with the instructional focus that emerged from the data. Other teams are doing a brief pre-assessment and using more frequent formative assessments during the unit to monitor progress and build the skills needed to be successful on the post-test. As a part of our instructional playbook, checking for understanding is a priority for our lesson design. Teachers use a range of both formal and informal formative assessment measures to collect ongoing data. This includes exit slips for lesson monitoring to weekly reflection logs.

In addition, we are scaling up our initiative around standards-referenced grading. Teacher teams are using proficiency scales as a way to help students have more clarity on where they are in regards to the learning target, and their next steps to meet their learning goals. We have a teacher leadership workgroup that has designed professional learning around quality feedback. Each building will engage in two modules of teacher-led professional development during this school year around student feedback.

In regards to monitoring, collaborative teams enter their mid-point common formative assessments into our data management system. This allows teams to study growth and determine the impact of instructional strategies. It also allows teams at the system level to monitor growth, particularly for our subgroups.

2. **Data Teams:**
   Are the data teams mentioned in the application different than collaborative teams at the grade levels or departments? Is the membership of the data teams different than

the membership of the collaborative teams? If so, how are the members of the data teams selected and does the membership on the data teams rotate? Do all teachers have an opportunity to participate in data review teams? One of the things we believe is that all teachers benefit from the process of analyzing data; it builds ownership and supports the notion of learning together through a process of collective inquiry that is so fundamental to the PLC process. Can you elaborate on the details of the Data Team structure used in Southeast Polk Schools?

We have adjusted our overall structure to be called collaborative teams. The different names address the specific purpose of the teams. For the most part, the make-up of the data team is the same as the collaborative team. However, we do have some job-alike collaborative teams as well as collaborative data teams. So for example, during quarterly meeting times, all special education teachers might meet together to share instructional strategies and ideas that are having the most impact for students. During their weekly meetings, they will meet with their collaborative teams to analyze data and collaboratively design an instructional response.

When e started this process, we collectively studied the data teams process and have identified these processes that are common across all data teams:

- *Collect and Chart Data*
- *Analyze Data and Prioritize Needs*
- *Establish Goals*
- *Select Instructional Strategies*
- *Determine Results Indicators*

As we sent teams to the PLC Institutes, we added to our body of knowledge. We understood that a process of analyzing data can help teams focus their efforts and actions on key ideas. Robert Eaker and Janel Keating suggest an agenda for a grade-level teacher team looking at the results of an assessment given to all students. They suggest about five minutes for each item, with more time for two toward the end:

- *What are the "priority standards" or learning targets measured by this assessment?*
- *In what areas did our students do well?*
- *What instructional strategies helped our students do well?*
- *What skill deficiencies do we see?*
- *What patterns do we see in the mistakes, and what do they tell us?*
- *Which students did not master essential standards and which need additional time and support?*
- *What interventions will be provided to address unlearned skills, and how will we check for success? (20 minutes)*

- *Which students mastered standards and what is our plan for extending and enriching their learning? (10 minutes)*
- Do we need to tweak or improve this assessment?

Every School, Every Team, Every Classroom: District Leadership for Growing Professional Learning Communities at Work by Robert Eaker and Janel Keating
(Solution Tree, 2012)

As we expanded our structure to include teacher leadership, we revised our process to include the analysis of student work. This added a support structure that included the instructional coach and model teachers.

SEP Analysis of Student Work Template

*As teams implemented these protocols and continued to attend the PLC Institutes, they began to revise and develop their own processes for looking at data. This is a much encouraged practice as it meets the specific needs of each team/department/building, and contributes to teacher efficacy. It is not **what** protocol we use, but **that** we have one.*

The work from the PLC Institutes reminds us that there are 2 main questions our data analysis protocols should address:

- *What does this data tell us?*

- *What are we going to do about it?*

Our data analysis protocols help us answer PLC questions 3 and 4 and remind us that the impact of gathering data is the extent to which it changes instructional practice. The purpose of these assessments is to identify what we need to adjust so all students will meet the standards.

- *What will we do when students do not learn?*

- *What will we do if they already know it?*

We would like to close this section by sharing an example of a team attending a PLC Institute and the subsequent result for student learning.

Two years ago, we had a team attend a PLC Institute in St. Charles, Missouri. During that institute, a team was inspired by a session led by Dr. Luis Cruz. They returned with a request

and plan to implement an English Learners Task force. This task force was begun at our 7th and 8th grade building. The team included teachers, teacher leaders, curriculum leaders, and the building principal. The agendas encompassed work around the ELP standards (what we want students to learn) as well as multiple pieces of data (how will we know they have learned it). During these task force meetings, teachers were able to share instructional strategies that were having the best impact for English learners (what we will do if they don't learn it; what we will do if they already know it). Teacher teams made a commitment to implement high yield strategies for an agreed upon frequency.

When the team reviewed end of the year state assessments, they were very excited to see positive results. For the first time since we began examining EL subgroup data, Southeast Polk EL students at both the 7th and 8th grade levels achieved proficiency at a higher level than EL students across both Heartland AEA and the state of Iowa in reading, math, and science! Below are the agendas of each task force meeting and the resulting data. This work was a true testament to the power or collaboration and the positive impact on student learning. We are now in the process of scaling up this model to include more English learners as well as transferring this collaborative example for our students receiving special education services.

[*JH EL Task Force Agenda*](#)

[*Task Force Results*](#)

> **3. Delivery of Tier 2 and Tier 3 Interventions:**
> The application mentions the District's efforts to create a robust MTSS but it was unclear how the Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions were delivered. How would you characterize the predominant way Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions are delivered? Is it based within an individual classroom with teachers pulling Tier 2 and Tier 3 groups while other students work independently, pull out by specialists, delivered to students who have been regrouped by need across multiple classrooms, or some combination of these approaches? Can you elaborate a bit more on how the extra time and support is delivered?

Our multi-tiered system of support has many commonalities across buildings, including the use of data to plan interventions and enrichment that are focused and precise based on the needs of the students. There is also a common approach regarding determining the effectiveness of core instruction and making adjustments to Tier I instruction to benefit all students. While all schools carve out time in their schedule for flexible instruction and intentional planning for interventions and enrichments, schools implement this in different ways depending on their needs and teacher resources.

The first layer of intervention that we focus on is classroom based. Our instructional delivery model allows for guided practice, collaborative learning, and independent application. During these phases, a teacher might pull small groups to reteach a skill, strategy, or standard and provide additional examples and more practice. This small group might be facilitated by the teacher or a push-in specialist. When a reading specialist or interventionist is pushed into the classroom, then both the classroom teacher and interventionist work with small groups.

During the dedicated time that each building has set aside, we are more likely to see groupings across multiple classrooms based on data analysis with extra practice on the targeted standard, building the pre-requisite skills necessary to be successful with the standard, or enrichment and extension of the standard.

While we have a districtwide model, individual buildings are encouraged to schools implement in different ways depending on their needs and teacher resources. Having said that, all of our principals are attending a series of leadership trainings this year, and the focus of our 8 elementary buildings is MTSS. They are working as a team to design shared and common commitments to this model, as well as opportunities to share success stories and challenges. As a district, we are studying the data and have found some grade levels across the district that are exceeding district averages in literacy achievement and special education achievement (a focus for our district). Our teaching and learning team will be working with these teams to learn more about what is happening both in their collaboration and their instruction to determine ways to build this capacity across the district.

The links below show some examples of how the data is compiled and studied at the district level to help support all teams. This is also shared with building leaders and shared with each individual building.

[Fall Literacy Data](#)