Southeast Polk Community Schools
PLC Application Response

1. The regular assessment of students every six weeks is good however, six weeks is a long time to wait for feedback on how students are progressing. The bi-weekly progress monitoring of students is encouraging but has the District seen any evidence of a move from the initial pre- post format of assessment to greater use of formative assessment during instruction? If so, what evidence can you share and how is that trend toward greater use of formative assessment being monitored.

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. Can you explain a little more about the multi-tiered system of support that schools developed? Is it similar from school to school? Are there formal ways principals share the structures (schedules, staffing, other resources) of the MTSS system? How does the District monitor the presence of and access to additional time and support? Is there a mechanism for sharing what works and what doesn't work when teacher teams respond to questions 3? Is there a way the District is able to monitor the efficacy of the six-week progress monitoring process?

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. 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](#)

3. The regular and routine dedicated time for teachers to collaborate is impressive. Likewise, the commitment to vertical articulation is evident. Can you describe how long (length of time devoted to teacher collaboration) are these quarterly collaboration meetings?

Our quarterly collaboration meetings are for 90 minutes each session. The take place during our early release and late start times that are allocated for professional learning. I am sharing some links to some of our recent work in these collaboration sessions. The first link is a SPEAK session for secondary Social Studies. SPEAK refers to "Sharing Positive Educational Activities and Knowledge". We rotate representative staff to annual conferences, and the SPEAK sessions are a way for attendees to collaborate and share information from these conferences.

[Southeast Polk Secondary Social Studies Collaboration](#)

Below is an elementary collaboration from last spring that includes sessions led by teachers. We collect feedback after each collaboration, and the most frequent and positive feedback that we receive is that they appreciate learning from each other during these collaboration times.

[Southeast Polk Elementary Collaboration](#)

We would like to close 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