

Final Inquiry-Based Project

Vertical Content Area Meetings at Green Elementary School

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Vertical Meeting Team Members

Mrs. Christine Miller, Principal

Mr. Joel Besancon, Intern, Facilitator (3-5 Math), 5th Grade Math Teacher

Mrs. Nancy Dravenstott, Facilitator (3-5 ELA), 5th Grade ELA Teacher

Mrs. Kristin Wertz, Facilitator (4-5 Sci./SS), 5th Grade Science Teacher

Mr. Neal Johnson, Facilitator (K-2 Math), 2nd Grade Teacher

Mrs. Cindy Madding, Facilitator (K-2 ELA), K-2 Intervention Specialist

Interview with Mrs. Miller

Mrs. Miller communicated to me that a focus for the second semester of the 2016-2017 school year was to have vertical content area meetings. We have had meetings in the past that were very loosely structured, and often turned into a place for teachers to complain and accuse each other of not teaching effectively due to the lack of ability of their current students. Mrs. Miller shared these concerns and I also agreed, having participated in prior meetings. Mrs. Miller allowed me access to staff meeting exit ticket information regarding these meetings. We then discussed how this information affects students and their families. Although we did not involve these stakeholders in the meetings, we do see the importance in their inclusion.

Interview with Mrs. Miller, continued.

I also feel very passionate about this issue as a school leader. Being a teacher in the highest grade level of the building provided me with a perspective of how students are educated in math from grades K-5. One of the most consistent concerns communicated among all math teachers is the student's' lack of number sense and fact fluency. This project will not only allow me to have a role as a school leader, but also give me more perspective of how students are instructed in number sense and fact fluency.

#1 Conducting a school community needs assessment

The needs assessment included staff surveys and staff meeting exit ticket information regarding the need and implementation strategies for K-5 vertical meetings by content area. Conversations took place during grade-level TBT meetings due to the fact that teachers are expected to collect data across content areas, which is also a current challenge. The BLT developed solutions for the TBT data collection tool, and the focus of my project focused on the implementation of K-5 vertical content area meetings.

#1 Conducting a school community needs assessment

Discussions of how to include perspectives of other school community members were had, but no data was collected. It appears as though a comprehensive culture and climate survey will be sent to school community members in May, 2017, however data was not available at the time of this project.

It was my intention to survey both students and parents at various grade levels to gain their perspectives on the transition of expectations from grade to grade throughout Green Elementary.

#1 Conducting a school community needs assessment

Qualitative data was collected via a Staff Meeting Exit Ticket.

#1 Conducting a school community needs assessment

The Exit Ticket was completed either individually or as a grade level team and was to be submitted by February 6, 2017. The following questions were answered.

We should meet: Weekly or Monthly?

All staff members prefer to meet monthly, with the exception of two staff members who wish to meet bi-monthly.

Each teacher was given the opportunity to share topics for discussion for vertical content area meetings.

By providing open-ended questions, teachers were better able to communicate very broad answers that included a variety of topics. A summary of responses in on the next slide.

#1 Conducting a school community needs assessment

ELA	Math	Science	Social Studies
<p>Curriculum, Writing, Testing. Test preparation, gaps in student learning, consistency across grade levels. IEP skills. Foundations, writing curriculum, Clay's, F & P. Writing expectations, balanced literacy.</p>	<p>New textbook series, Fact memorization. Number/Operations in Base 10 standards. Curriculum, assessments, and grading. Identify expectations at each grade. Using technology. Resource sharing. Manipulative Library. Online testing resources.</p>	<p>Depth of standards, Vocabulary. Skills at each grade level. Assessment expectations.</p>	<p>Vocabulary, government, and economics. Skills at each grade level. Assessment expectations.</p>

#1 Conducting a school community needs assessment

Strengths:

- Resources are equitable across grades and subject areas
- Resources are aligned to standards
- Curriculum is aligned to state standards
- Curriculum is appropriate for students being taught

Challenges:

- Stakeholders of the school do not fully understand policies and procedures as they relate to vertical alignment
- Communication between stakeholders on roles they play in vertical alignment is unclear and often undefined

#2 Collecting Data - Resources

Bambrick-Santoyo, P. (2010). *Driven by data: A practical guide to improve instruction*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Downey, C. J., Steffy, B. E., Poston, W. K., & English, F. W. (2009). *50 ways to close the achievement gap* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Drake, S. M. (2012). *Creating standards-based integrated curriculum: The common core state standards edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

English, F. (2010). *Deciding what to teach and test: Developing, aligning, and auditing the curriculum* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Grogan, M. (2013). *The Jossey-Bass reader on educational leadership* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.

Mercer, S. H., & Keller-Margulis, M. A. (2015). Consistency And Magnitude Of Differences In Reading Curriculum-Based Measurement Slopes In Benchmark Versus Strategic Monitoring. *Psychol. Schs. Psychology in the Schools*, 52(3), 316-324. doi:10.1002/pits.21823

Smythe, M., Kibler, R. J., & Hutchings, P. W. (1973). A comparison of norm-referenced and criterion-referenced measurement with implications for communication instruction. *The Speech Teacher*, 22(1), 1-17. doi:10.1080/03634527309377976

#2 Collecting Data

Challenge Statement

Teachers will utilize six 30-minute meetings in order to participate in one of five content-based vertical meetings (i.e. K-2 English/Language Arts, K-2 Math, 3-5 English/Language Arts, 3-5 Math, and 4-5 Science/Social Studies) to align the use curriculum resources, coordinate grading practices, and identify necessary skills across grade levels.

#2 Collecting Data

Significance of the Challenge

Since the combination of Smithville Elementary School and Marshallville Elementary School to create Green Elementary School, there has been a lack of focused transition from grade to grade as teachers began a new schedule and/or teaching assignment. This challenge seems to have caused frustration to all school community members at various levels.

#2 Collecting Data

Pertinent
Background
Information

Green Elementary School has had a different master schedule for the past three years.

Teacher mobility continues to be a concern as inconsistent class sizes have forced teachers to move to other grade levels and/or content areas.

A Math textbook adoption and pending English/Language Arts curriculum adoption has increased the need for vertical collaboration.

#2 Collecting Data

Research Questions

How do vertical content area meetings impact student achievement?

What topics of discussion during vertical content area meetings are most pertinent to student?

How is the alignment of resources impacting student achievement?

#3 Proposing Research-Based Solutions

Information on the policies, procedures, and roles should be disseminated at every meeting or engagement (Bambrick-Santoyo, 2010). By disseminating this information access to desired information will become easier for those who wish to seek it. Also with this transparency comes trust and support of the policies and administration (Grogan, 2013).

#3 Proposing Research-Based Solutions

Procedures for communication of goals, procedures, and responsibilities between all stakeholders will be created by the vertical alignment teams. Communication will be accomplished by using multimedia sources such as, newsletters, the district website, and report cards (Grogan, 2013). This must be multidisciplinary in order to align all stakeholders' goals and practices to each other and students' needs (Drake, 2012).

#3 Proposing Research-Based Solutions

A gap analysis is necessary to identify where the students are compared to where the district would like them to be at the conclusion of each school year (English, 2010). Analyzing the curriculum to determine the type of content, context, cognitive type, and standard performance is needed. This will fill in any “missing” pieces that affect the teacher’s planning and teaching (Downey, Steffy, Poston, & English, 2009).

#3 Proposing Research-Based Solutions

A curriculum based measurement (CBM) will be used to screen students to be identified as “at-risk” and use progress monitoring to improve their scores (Mercer & Keller-Margulis, 2015). Using criterion referenced measurement, evaluates the student’s progress as an individual, not comparing that student’s progress against other students (Smythe, Kibler, & Hutchings, 1973).

#4 Evaluating Each Solution - Rationalization

Although in the very early stages of working toward progress, the Grades 3-5 Math Team has identified multiplication fact fluency as a necessary skill across all grade levels. They have developed a data collection tool and will begin tracking student data toward a goal to improve all students to 85% fact mastery of all facts within 100. They will then be using this data to communicate with students, parents, and other school community members to help impact student achievement. This will be used as a model for the other vertical meeting teams.

#5 Creating an Action Plan

From February, 2017-May 2017, vertical teams of teachers met six times to align curriculum resources, coordinate grading practices, and identify necessary skills across grade levels. The following forms were used to focus each group.

[Obtain forms by clicking here.](#)

#5 Creating an Action Plan

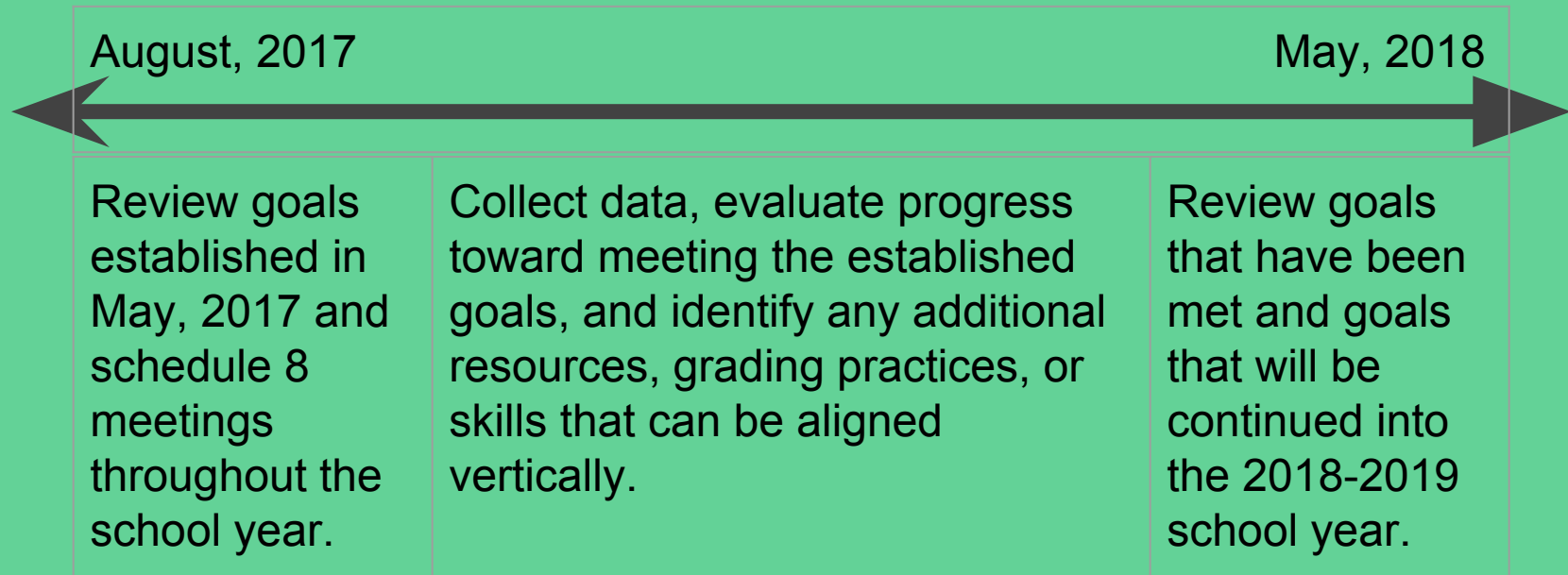
Teachers will identify one goal related to each topic to implement during the 2017-2018 school year.

Goals will be established at the final vertical meeting of the year on May 11, 2017.

#5 Creating an Action Plan

Vertical Teams will meet 8 times during the 2017-2018 school year to revise/edit the established goals. These meetings will take place approximately twice per quarter.

#5 Creating an Action Plan - Timeline



#6 Inquiry-Based Learning Reflection

I have learned that leading a team of teachers toward alignment (of anything) is difficult. Reflecting on the challenge statement presented at the beginning of the presentation leads me to realize that it was a very lofty goal (to align curriculum resources, grading practices, and skills across multiple grade levels). There has to be complete buy-in of all stakeholders, an understanding that flexibility is needed, and that everyone involved has student success at the center of the conversations. It will also be extremely important for students and families to be involved in this process as it continues. We have laid a solid foundation on which to build, but in order to be most effective, students and families will need to be continuously involved in the decisions we make.

#7 School Leadership Team Evaluation

School community members attending the presentation will complete a rubric as a means of assessing the candidate's knowledge, ability, and competency to facilitate resolutions aligned with the needs of the school campus. Evaluations will be placed in a sealed envelope and submitted to the university supervisor on the last day of class.