

Student Learning: District Role in Assessment Practice

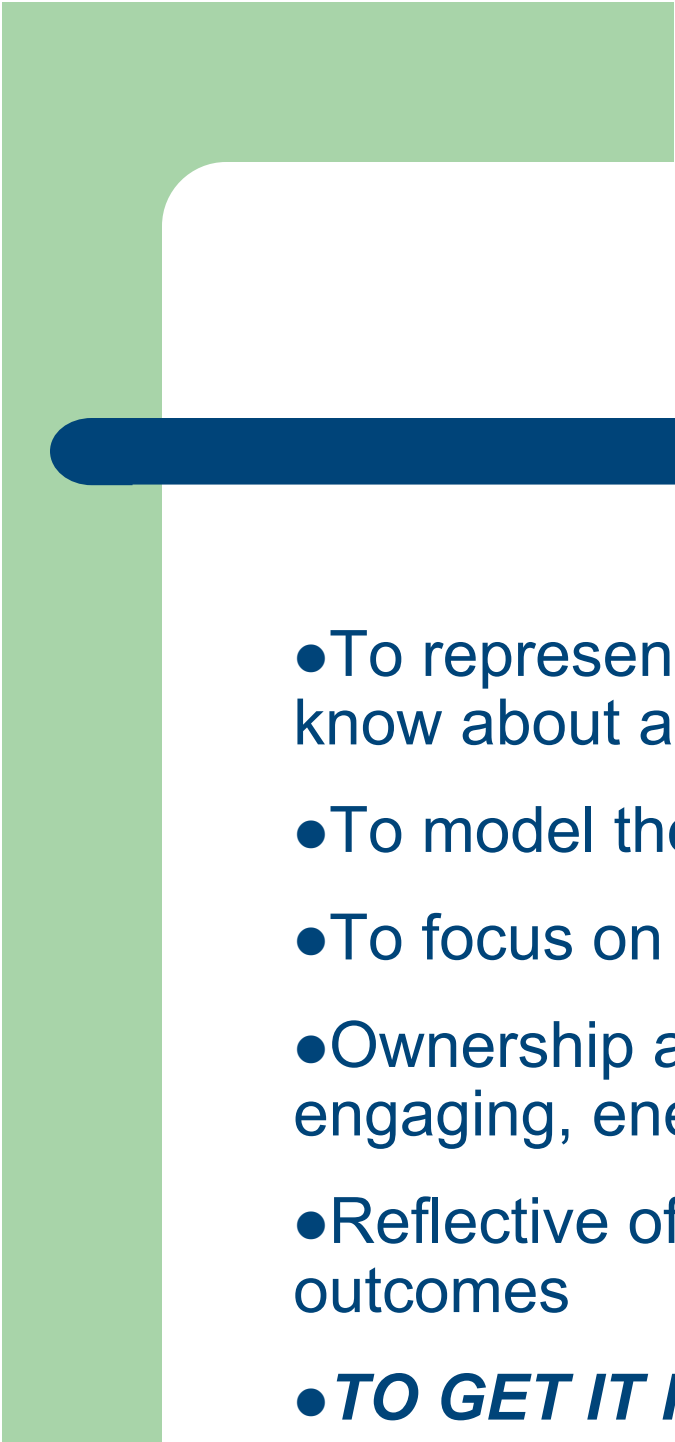

*School District #5
Southeast Kentucky*



*Students: Our bridge to the future
Nos Enfants: Un passage vers l'avenir*

What *did* we want?

- To improve student learning in the area of writing
- To model appropriate assessment practice
- District perspective on student writing
- Enhanced understanding and use of Performance Standards
- Classroom achievement data to help inform our Accountability Contract (Assessment OF Learning)
- Data to inform classroom instruction (Assessment FOR and AS Learning)
- District review _ - need to find and have assessment data which was closer to the classroom

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- To represent the best of what we know about assessment and learning
 - To model the teaching / learning cycle
 - To focus on instruction
 - Ownership and value-added; engaging, energizing, job-embedded
 - Reflective of B. C. Curriculum learning outcomes
 - ***TO GET IT RIGHT!!!***

Why a District Writing Assessment?

- Why did we choose to start with Writing?
 - We have had a Writing goal in the district for the past 3 years
 - Most schools had a writing goal
 - Work in Early Literacy using writing performance standards
 - Grades 5 and 9 writing project for past 3 years
 - Area of both growth and weakness Gr. 4 FSA and Grade 10 FSA
 - It was concrete and teachers felt comfortable

Where did we start?

- We started at the District level – looking at what we needed to do; clarity of purpose
- Worked with our Leadership group for advice and planning
- Our Director, Early Literacy teacher and Pat Dooley built a plan
- Worked with Principals on why this is important and what their role would be
- Built support with our District Education Leadership Team (DELT)

What was our plan?

- To use SD#40, New Westminster's S.M.A.R.T. Approach to writing assessment;
- To set an expectation and support for principal leadership in the process
 - * starting, structuring, sustaining the conversation at the school level; student work at the center
 - * connecting to school growth plan process
 - * leading data-driven dialogue

What was our plan?

- Link to the supervision for learning agenda
- Support with professional development
- Develop leadership capacity in the area of literacy
- To think win-win; moral purpose; strong foundation; staff a part of the process; (Leadership Group)

What We Did

- Workshops / Training Sessions for literacy team leaders (each school grades 3, 5, 9 teacher and a principal)
- Focus at Principal meetings
- S.M.A.R.T. focus (Susan Close workshop in August, Pat Dooley leadership)
- Provided time for leaders to plan and work with staff
- Provided growth plan school funding to enable staff collaborative time to review and interpret the results and develop instructional plans for improvement

What We Did (Continued)

- Kept the focus on Assessment For Learning (the actual “write” was not an “event”)
- Two week time
- “Black Box” research supports S.M.A.R.T. approach
- Time to debrief workshops with literacy leaders (e.g. Faye Brownlie, Caren Cameron follow-up)
- Primary writing projects
- Allowed practice assessments

Reaction to what we did?

- Secondary Principal comment, “Look at me, I am coding!”
- Synergy, energy, fuels our profession
- Stop doing
- District presence / focus on learning
- No resistance
- Teachers’ comments

Where to from here?

- Two assessments next year...grades 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10 (some schools all grades)
- Continue literacy TEAM / Coaches
- Continue work with principals
- Use same process to develop reading and numeracy assessments
- Continue conversations on alignment between school / district plans
- Involve the Secondary School (writing across the curriculum)
- Commitment to ongoing staff development
- Stay the course
- Work with DPAC / parents / community
- Model Data-Driven Dialogue: Analyze District results / what support is needed?

Teacher Comments ... all about learning and teaching

- **Good teaching gets good results (Aboriginal Resource Teacher)**
- **Have to use strategies embedded regularly for kids to get used to them; give kids the language (Middle School Teacher)**
- **Adults and students need lots of conversation about this (Intermediate Teacher)**
- **Goal-setting changed the way my kids thought about their writing (Middle School Teacher)**
- **Structure leads to creativity, what power for weaker students (Intermediate Teacher)**
- **Stresses the importance of assessment, not just good planning and presentation. We have always prided ourselves on our planning and presentation. (Primary Teacher)**
- **Self-assessment becomes more than a score ... enables specific goal-setting (Secondary Teacher)**
- **Challenges the top writers (Intermediate Teacher)**
- **Kids have not understood what is being assessed; this is about assessment as learning; closer to the kids (Principal)**

Questions

- 1. When you think about SD#5's District Approach to Writing Assessment, what's important and why?
- 2. What is your district's role in getting meaningful classroom-based data on student performance?
- 3. Does the assessment process used have the potential to improve student learning? If so, how? If not, why not?
- 4. What advice would you give to SD#5 as they continue with this assessment model?