

Promising Practices and Implementation Tools–Final Template

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3. District(s) Where Implemented: Attleboro Public Schools

4. Lever Addressed and Title of Promising Practice: Organizational Structure

5. How This Practice Reflects District’s Mission & Core Values:

Attleboro’s vision for the district is continuous improvement in student achievement at all grade levels and in all disciplines. There are several facets to this work and the district has created a number of organizational structures and committees, each with different but interconnected goals and functions, to do its work. Connecting vision, process and action plans to district and school improvement plans is mandated. Leaders know that the organizational structures in place in a system can either provide opportunities or create obstacles and have prioritized developing structures that can support and sustain the district’s vision and mission.

6. Goals of This Practice:

Three key organizational structures/committees operating in the district are:

(1) District Data and Accountability Committee (DDAC) (2) District Curriculum Committees (3) Technology Advisory Council.

Each of these committees has its own goals and functions but the work of all is closely connected to the shared goal of using student data to identify and analyze strengths and areas of concern in student achievement, and how to address the latter.

The district places a high value on educator expertise to ensure preparedness and optimal conditions for working with data. If data is driving decisions about teaching and learning, those working with data need to be well prepared to do so. All three committees use data to inform what adjustments to curriculum, instruction and assessments need to be made. A related goal is to foster and support a professional culture in which teachers trust the process of data-driven work. They need to trust that the data being used is reliable and the process of deciding what to do is well informed and responsible. Teachers also need to be trained in how to understand data shared with them, and then supported in addressing what the data is saying. Furthermore, if expectations of work on teachers' behalf are increased, time must be allotted for the work to be done.

6. Description of the Practices of each Organizational Structure:

(1) District Data and Accountability Committee: This committee is composed of principals, assistant principals, district curriculum coordinators and department heads who collect and cross reference

multiple sources of data on student performance including MCAS and District Common Assessments in Math and ELA. The committee organizes, summarizes and analyzes the data. Interpretations and conclusions are compiled in reports, which are shared with the appropriate constituencies, (for example, curriculum committees) and action plans are developed to address concerns about student achievement. Data is used to inform district goals, priorities and improvement plans going forward.

District administrators and other members of the Data and Accountability Committee are aware that data can be threatening to teachers who may believe it is used in an oversimplified way, or may be taken out of context. Leaders are sensitive to this and provide as much information about their thinking and process as possible. They communicate that the process of collecting, interpreting and using data takes time and expertise to be valid, reliable and helpful to “teachers-in-the-trenches”. Transparency and ongoing communication are essential.

The Committee uses outcomes and conclusions from the data as follows: School Improvement goals and plans reflect what is learnt from the data; decisions about what PD needs to be provided to support teachers are informed by the data: coaches use the data in their work with teachers in their classrooms; instructional leadership teams in the district include themes from the data in their evaluation of teachers.

(2) District Curriculum Committee: Two committees are in place – one for Math and one for ELA. These are comprised of Math and ELA

Curriculum Coordinators, Grades K–8 and 9–12 teachers, and coaches who serve all the buildings in the district. There are no administrators on this committee. Their task is curriculum revision, based on what the data is saying, and adjustments in assessment and instruction are made as needed too. In similar fashion to the work of the DDAT, areas of concern are identified, and the information is shared with teachers who are supported by leaders in addressing concerns. Professional Development days are dedicated to this.

Once the concerns are articulated, improvement objectives are established. This includes: (a) assessing the capacity of current strategies to address improvement objectives (b) researching and implementing new strategies where needed (c) developing action plans, a process, and a time line to implement the new strategies.

(3) Technology Advisory Council: The use of technology is no longer a choice; it's an expectation across the district. This group helps increase and improve access to instructional technology so that technology is a tool rather than an obstacle to the work. The goal is to make all the data collected known and easily accessible to the appropriate constituencies.

The Council consists of two sub-committees:

(a) **Instruction Committee** – focused on how the use of technology is supporting student learning. The district uses the ASPEN Educational Management and Software System for its variety of capabilities such as linking staff, students, parents and teachers in real time, digitally, and linking classrooms to district curriculum planning work. Historically,

ASPEN has not been efficiently institutionalized, and the district is doing the following now: 1) assessing what the needs for training in the system are and providing more formal and differentiated training to meet different needs among employees; 2) clearly communicating the expectations regarding use of the program.

(b) **Operations Committee** – focused on operational concerns that indirectly impact student learning. This committee is taking responsibility for operational matters that would otherwise take time away from teaching and learning. An example is addressing a district-wide transportation issue that was previously handled by the principals but this drained their attention from teaching and learning.

Applicable Grade Levels: Grades K–12

How This Practice Was Implemented So It Was More Successful Than Others Used:

When the committees described above were first established, they operated independently. Now the work of the separate committees is interwoven based on a broader context of values and vision for the district. Examples are: (1) Hiring: The lens on candidates for jobs includes serious consideration of qualifications and capabilities with technology. (2) Overall, more Professional Development is planned and implemented to support teachers. (3) Use of technology is an important component in the evaluation of teachers and staff. (4) In the New Teacher Induction

Curriculum, more technology training and ongoing support is provided so new teachers can be successful. (5) The Evaluation Implementation Team, working on DDM's as part of accountability for teachers' performance, is linking its work directly to the three committees.

While data-driven decision-making is not new, what has changed is the collaborative work among the committees. For example, the Technology Committee looked at its effectiveness in supporting the demands for data and is working on better turnaround time. Where the Curriculum Committees used to convene to write and revise curriculum based on the Curriculum Frameworks, and the Common Core Curriculum, the focus is on curriculum in light of the work of all the committees as well.

Some school personnel serve on all the committees making it easier for the discourse and work to reflect the combined findings, thinking and planning of all three committees.

10. Criteria For This Particular Lever Most Exemplified In This

Practice:

Levers considered are: Organizational Structure and Professional

Culture:

School and district year calendars include time for teachers to engage in ongoing professional growth with colleagues who share content and students

District uses data in meaningful ways to help educators improve

instruction

Educators have access to clear, consistent, standards-based curriculum, assessments and curriculum

Teachers engage in instructional conversations, collaborative planning, and ongoing collegial support

District and schools are characterized by a climate of shared responsibility for continuous improvement

Data are continuously examined and analyzed to guide instructional decision-making

How This Practice Changed The District or School:

By interconnecting the work of the different committees, there is greater consistency in work across the district. Representation at all levels ensures collaboration, communication, support and accountability. It is too soon to know and assess outcomes for students. However, this integrated system has seen the following changes: (1) The district has taken in bids on an RFP to improve the band in the district (2) The Capital Improvement Plan includes the money and resources to establish a large Wireless Project Initiative (3) There is a significant increase in Professional Development at all levels and for faculty as well as other personnel.

Examples of some of the changes that have occurred in teacher practice in Math and ELA are: a) more teacher modeling b) more differentiated

instruction c) more student practice and application focused on areas of weakness identified through the DDAC.

Another example of a change that has occurred is that the DDAC recommended students need more instruction in reading and analyzing complex texts. This led to the Curriculum Committee researching and adding more non-fiction to the curriculum, and working with the PD Committee to provide additional training for ELA teachers. The Technology Committee helped find and deploy appropriate internet sources for teachers, coordinators and coaches.

Assessments also needed to be changed and this impacted the work of the Teacher Evaluation Team in looking at teacher performance and effectiveness.

Other changes that are ongoing are: (a) communication across the district has improved as the committees are structured to keep staff and their work interconnected at multiple levels (b) consistency of messages regarding priorities, plans and processes has increased.

While the general staff has seen some presentations on the vision and work of the grant that supports the committees' work, there are still varying degrees of knowledge and understanding and the district's communication plan continues to be a work in progress. The grant ended in 2013, and leaders are working on a plan to sustain the work.

Surveys are administered to gather staff's feedback on the effectiveness of the data-driven approach and this information is used to inform future decision-making and action plans.

Resources (time, money, materials etc.) Required For Successful Implementation:

BUDGET INFORMATION: Below is information pertaining to money used to finance the work of the different committees identified and described above.

ILT:

2013/2014 - \$19,500
2012/2013 - \$15,000
2011/2012 - \$15,250

3 year average - \$16,583

Curriculum Committees (from HRPP only):

2013/2014 to date - \$4,214
2012/2013 - \$26,689
2/11/2012 - \$23,438

3 year average - \$18,114

Curriculum Committees (from both RTTT/HRPP):

2013/2014 to date - \$13,476
2012/2013 - \$34,245
2/11/2012 - \$28,578

3 year average – \$25,433

Tools Used To Implement Or Advance This Practice (surveys, needs assessments, technology tools, rubrics, feedback Forms etc.)