

2017-2018 District 11 PLC Team Bright Spots Research

Summary

The goal of the Bright Spot process in District 11 this year is to feature Professional Learning Community (PLC) teams with high growth on Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC), learn from them, and share that learning across the system as a means of systematic improvement.

The departments of Instruction Curriculum (ICSS), and Student Services, Educational Data and Support Services (EDSS), and the Achieve Team collaboratively developed a process for identifying and learning from high performing PLC teams that has included:

- 1) facilitating focus groups,
- 2) coding and analyzing themes,
- 3) sharing the results,
- 4) observing teams to add validity, and
- 5) coordinating cross-district observations.

EDSS and ICSS developed the focus group protocol, and then hosted teacher teams in the Fall based on specified criteria around high growth in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math on last year's PARCC exams.

Focus group participants and facilitators expressed that the time spent together was some of the best Professional Learning they have experienced and that they truly appreciated focusing on what is going well rather than the norm of focusing on what is going wrong.

Following the bright spot focus groups with teacher teams, a team from ICSS coded the teachers' responses and identified emergent themes for analysis. We shared those findings with all principals and those who participated in the focus groups in early November. A more detailed analysis of those themes is included in this summary report.

Our next step as a team included developing and calibrating observation protocols and scheduling visits to the bright spot teams. ICSS---particularly content facilitators and literacy specialists---and the Achieve Team Instructional Coaches observed several of the teams to confirm best practices and then coordinated visits from other schools to high performing teams across D11. In addition to coordinating cross-district PLC visits, the Achieve Coaches and ICSS have provided and continue to provide technical assistance to the teams following their observation of bright spots.

As this is our first attempt to focus on bright spot PLC teams, we have intentionally started small and slow, highlighting a few schools for cross-district observations, with the intention of affirming growth data on other measures and expanding the process into second semester and next fall.

We will be gathering feedback on the entire process through the District PLC Committee and validating our Bright Spot process through implementation science tools as part of our Multi-

Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) grant project with the Colorado Department of Education (CDE).

Three emergent themes were identified as key components to successful work

- Small group instruction
- Relationships with students
- Strategic assessment through PLC collaboration

In the future, we are seeking to find other ways of leveraging this type of bright spot process as a form of Professional Learning to scale learning across the organization beyond PLC teams identified using PARCC growth data.

In the meantime, Bright Spot teams agreed to allow district coaches and content facilitators, as well as teacher teams from other schools, to visit and observe their work. ICSS and the Achieve team coordinated efforts and created a robust process to facilitate visits from one school to another, a model we hope to grow this year and beyond. Taking advantage of this opportunity, many teams have visited and applied essential PLC strategies learned from others, including visits from our designated ACT schools.

Team Selection Process

EDSS utilized a separate process for elementary and secondary schools to select participating teams. For elementary team selection, schools were sorted by grade level and subject areas. Those groupings were paired with averages of the Student Growth Percentiles (SGP) for math and English Language Arts. Teams with mean SGPs over 60 for overall results were selected for initial review. Additionally, groups were again sorted by sub-groups for high growth performance preferably above 50 in areas such as students on free and reduced lunch and minority status. Entire grade level teams were invited if the data demonstrated exceptionally high performance. A mean of 50 was used as the initial cut score for review for secondary math and ELA. A similar criterion was used for sub-group growth performance. Teams with exceptional performance were invited by subject area. Teams from 20* schools were invited to attend. More than 40 classroom educators participated in the research.

Participating Schools

Adams	Audubon	Bristol	Buena Vista
Carver	Edison	Grant	Henry
Keller	Penrose	Scott	Steele
Trailblazer	Jenkins	Russell	West
			Achieve Online

* Some invited schools were unable to attend

Focus Group Protocol

Phase 1 - Recalling

Invited elementary teams sat at tables as schools and discussed the following question:

Tell a story about a time when your team saw the light bulbs go on for your students; what made that happen?

Teams were given 15 minutes to discuss the question and write notes on poster paper. Responses were collected.

Phase 2 - Discussing

Teams were grouped by subject or grade level and given one hour and thirty minutes to discuss the questions below. Conversations were guided by a trained facilitator to engage participants and ensure each person was given an opportunity to respond. Another facilitator took notes on poster paper during the conversation.

- What are the specific strategies that led to growth for your students?
- What will you be doing again this year that really worked last year?
- What strategies and practices would you share with other teams?

Phase 3 – Member Checking

Teams were given an opportunity to review the notes taken during the discussion phase and label the notes by importance (1, 2, or 3). (See images of poster paper note documents)

Phase 4 – Facilitator and Note Taker Checking

In phase 4, note takers and facilitators were given the opportunity to review the notes taken looking for clarity or unrecorded data. Notes were added using post-it paper notes to clarify data or add additional information regarding the team responses to focus questions.

Phase 5 – Data Analysis, Synthesis, and Evaluation

EDSS staff recorded all handwritten data into a spreadsheet format for review by ICSS team members. ICSS team members review results looking for themes.

Results

Based on team rankings for importance, the following practice areas were determined to be of significance in the research:

Elementary

- PLCs are not just a meeting. These teams embraced ongoing collaboration about improving instructional practice and student outcomes.
- Deliberately plan for higher rigor—through instruction, common assessments, and intervention
- Up the Challenge level early, and support students through formative assessments
- Intervene based on short cycle assessments, by name and need, to ensure all students are mastering critical content (teams shared students, and intervened within core instruction)
- Feedback should be connected to focused re-teaching groups
- Build a culture of reciprocal peer-tutoring
- Encourage student ownership of their learning, choice balanced by need to address skill gaps, goal setting.
- Use technology strategically to empower station rotations, using the data frequently, inform how best to focus instructional energy

- Utilize exemplars (for all subjects) to guide teaching, demonstrate expectations, inform peer tutoring
- Relationships—build a sense of community in the classroom
- Embed Reading and Writing across all content areas all year long
- Copious, yet strategic spiral review in math, with data tracking, to inform who hasn't mastered basics and needs more targeted support
- Shared ownership of math and ELA—everyone is in this together, we all own the scores

Middle School ELA

- Start early—raise the expectations for reading and writing, referencing text, beyond unfounded opinions.
 - Do not wait—let students know this test is a reflection of learning, informs class placement, determines access to electives, and affects how others perceive our school.
- Build cross curricular connections: everyone owned reading and writing, and reading and writing were married together, continuously requiring students to reference complex texts (integrate Achieve 3000 across content areas in an authentic manner)
- Conference with students often for frequent, manageable chunks of specific feedback on writing
 - Embrace the revision process, utilizing feedback, to improve growth mindset of students
- Build in lots of opportunities (early and often) for typing on a computer, attending to challenging PARCC-like prompts. Students need to build stamina!
- Integrate shorter reading tasks as novels in class bog things down and leave little time for analysis and writing.
- Utilize Exemplars to guide teaching, demonstrate expectations
- Leverage resources like Study Sync to raise the expectations, provide time for typing, student-revisions with peers.

Middle School Math

- Solution station: it is more than the answer; demonstrate to students the importance of showing work/process. Answers are easy to see, available to all. Students must own their learning and demonstration
- Strategic Re-teaching around skill deficiency
- Mastery-based approach: provide students multiple opportunities to learn and demonstrate learning—utilizing common, short cycle formative assessment cycles
- Lots of resources (video, paper, tutorials) and lots of access to teacher support
- Fine tune use of GK12 for higher level PARCC like items, and utilize release items frequently to build higher expectations.
- Develop targeted warm ups based on sub skills from GK12 (at a vetted level or rigor)

Emergent Themes

Small Group Instruction

Small group instruction emerged as theme based on a host of responses from teacher teams, primarily focused upon the intentional grouping of students by name and need. Teachers

reflected that forming student groups in a strategic manner, based on timely assessment data, allowed them to better meet the diverse needs of students for enrichment and intervention.

Relationships with Students

Building relationships with students stood out as an emergent theme and manifested in a variety of forms. Teachers pointed to the importance of high expectations combined with empathy and support. Teachers also championed the idea of getting to know each student, greeting them as individuals every day, and meeting them where they are individuals while simultaneously pointing to a high bar of expectations.

Strategic Assessment through PLC collaboration

Teacher teams pointed to the power of PLCs often during the course of the focus groups, particularly around getting the most from common formative assessments. Teams noted that breaking down assessment results to improve their instruction and better target interventions was a vital aspect to their success with the state assessment. Having time with colleagues to be intentional about a collective response to student needs, standard by standard, skill by skill, was also described as instrumental to student growth.

Follow up Observation and Sharing the Learning Across the District

Bright Spot teams agreed to allow district coaches and content facilitators, as well as teacher teams from other schools, to visit and observe their work. ICSS and the Achieve team coordinated efforts and created a robust process to facilitate visits from one school to another, a model we hope to grow this year and beyond. Taking advantage of this opportunity, many teams have visited and applied essential PLC strategies learned from others, including visits from our designated “ACT” schools.

In addition to visiting teams identified as Bright Spots initially, ICSS and the Achieve team implemented a broad effort to observe and coach teams across the district and identified even more bright spots (based on observation and current data). During this on-going cycle of observing and learning from teams, teachers and district coaches are expanding their networks and increasing the flow of professional knowledge across the district. The benefits appear to be accruing to both teams observing, and teams being observed. In fact, one of the schools with the most Bright Spot teams, Henry Elementary, was recently identified as “Model PLC” school by Solution Tree, an honor only two other schools in the state of Colorado have received.

Data Examples

Question 3

- Math minute - mixed review 10 questions
- Homework - support/review
 - Student graphing their own data
 - trade math minutes, other data
 - Student led conferences based on their data
 - folders
 - Moby Max - kids like
- Students grade own homework
 - circle one that you thought was hardest
 - possible opportunity for small groups
 - Ownership of learning - accountable
 - students choose opportunity for extra help
 - red so they can't work
- Relationships with students
 - offering time outside of class
 - greet each student
 - give ownership to students - choice, data collection
 - empower students
 - mindset - being a barrier too - ~~vulnerable~~ vulnerable (SP)
- Lattice math - missing from MX
- Honoring students who know it already - allowing another path

Question 3

- Link 8th math to Math X work

Question 2

- 1 Feedback to students
 - 1 rubrics, exemplars, checklists
 - 2 immediate
 - 3 what you have, one opportunity for growth
 - 4 specific
 - 5 time to respond
 - 6 single point → criteria for mastery and not yet

- 2 DOIL - demonstration of individual learning
 - 2 criteria/goal of what learning looks like (3/5 example)
 - 3 students can interact with DOILs to celebrate success
 - 4 data for small group

- 1 Plickers
 - 1 tech piece for getting ~~and the~~ information (student data) and then teacher can provide immediate feedback
 - 2 choose one or two from lesson to check on
 - 3 formative assessment for teacher - fast

Question 2

- 1 Calibrate peer reciprocal +
- 2
- 3
- 4