

Field Experience

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District Assessment Design and Evaluation Model/Process

Taft School District 90 currently has an assessment system and schedule put into place. The assessment system is broken down into three different levels: Local, State and National. There are currently four different local assessments at Taft: Accelerated Reader (AR), Informal Assessments, Standardized Test for the Assessment of Reading (STAR), and Diagnostic Interviews. According to the assessment schedule these tests occur throughout the duration of the school year, with the exception of STAR that occurs in April only for grades 2-8. The Diagnostic Interviews occur once in the winter and once in the spring.

The assessments given at the state level are the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) and ACCESS test for English-language learners. The ISAT test is state-mandated within the public school system. It is always given in early spring and students are placed into four categories for assessment results. These are: academic warning, below standards, meets standards and exceeds standards. The ACCESS test is given in the fall for students who have English as a second language.

The assessments that fall under the national level are the Measures of Academic progress (MAP) and AIMSWeb. MAP tests are given twice a year (fall and spring) for grades 3-8 in the subjects of reading, mathematics, and language usage. AIMSWeb testing is given three times a year (fall, winter and spring) and benchmarks student's progress in reading fluency and comprehension. This test is given to all students K-8 grade.

Taft does a nice job of assessing, using multiple data points and a variety of evaluations in assessing reading and mathematics. However, there are a few points to

improve upon. Testing schedules should be set in stone over the summer, so teachers receive the test schedule at the beginning of the school year to prepare and plan accordingly. At Taft, teachers are informed of the testing schedule a few days in advance, not giving proper time to plan. A discrepancy found was a test that was on the Taft assessment schedule, but not put on the assessment system. This test was the enVision math end-of-year test. It takes place at the very end of the year and it tracks student's progress within the enVision program. If a category were to be given to this assessment, it should be put into the local level because it goes along the lines of the taught curriculum.

The important thing that all districts need to make sure they are doing is using data consistently and effectively. Without these two elements, data collected from these assessments is invalid and proves to be of no use.

District Textbook Selection and Evaluation Model/Process

Taft Grade School does have a current textbook selection process along with a proposed cycle to implement these texts. The cycle that has been put into place has been broken down by subject area. There are only two updates that do not include the entire grade spectrum. These would be the Algebra text books since they are specific to the eighth graders only, along with the music curriculum because textbooks are only used from grades 1-4. The current purposed cycle goes from 2012-2016. The school is currently following this cycle and is updating their reading and algebra textbooks, in attempts to align them better to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS).

The textbook selection is a rather simple form to fill out. Four teachers or parents need to complete and submit said form before a book can be brought to the board for

approval. This process is more for books that students will be reading in class or to have added to the library. In the past three years this process has been used a few times to bring new novels into the reading classroom.

Taft currently does not have a formal textbook evaluation process put into place. This is something that should be discussed during Taft's negotiations at the end of the school year. If textbooks are not properly supplementing the curriculum, then another set that can better meet the district's needs should be purchased. The only way to know if curriculum textbooks are not properly working would be to evaluate them on a regular basis. With the CCSS adopted into Illinois, the rigor of curriculum has increased. In order to address this new standard of rigor, districts' needs to adopt textbooks that align.

District Staff/Professional Development and Evaluation Model/Process

Taft Grade School has a very detailed professional development plan that is in place. This is a new plan that was created over the summer. It outlines all of the professional development that is to take place over the next two years. This plan was handed out to the entire staff at the beginning of the school year. The plan starts with the major goals that Taft would like to accomplish in the next two years, and is then broken down to what will be covered in each individual School Improvement or Teacher Institute day throughout the following school year. Several events on this plan have already changed, most surrounding reprioritizing the timeline. This is a great way to work the professional plan because it gives teachers the ability to see where the district is heading and what the overall vision of Taft entails.

Administrative Interview

As a cohort, my classmates and I created a list of questions to ask our building administrator(s) on identifying diversity and cultural issues that are manifested in the curriculum. Kayde Ries and I both interviewed our district superintendent, Dr. DJ Skogsberg. The first question asked what he would attribute to the increase or decrease of scores from year to year. DJ said that an increase in scores would be attributed to targeted staff development in reading, and the decrease in scores would be attributed to cut score changes. The next question addresses our district subgroups, and which ones we focus on. Taft District 90 focuses mostly on high, medium, and low students on district test scores due to our limited numbers. But other subgroups we look at (but are not considered a subgroup on our District Report Card because of the numbers) include: Special Education, English-language learners (ELL), and free/reduced lunch. The third question asks if there are gender trends within the district. Generally in Taft, girls perform better in the area of reading, and Dr. Skogsberg attributes this to student interest level in the materials chosen to read. When asked about the Value-Added Growth Model, DJ stated that it creates multiple data points to triangulate student performance. DJ's thoughts on the teacher evaluation process related to student achievement is that it is appropriate because it shows a year's worth of growth. Our district addresses the needs of subgroups that are not meeting standards by extending the school day by a half hour two years ago to build in additional support time, and by the use of bridging and scaffolding by instructors. When asked what the district is doing to address students not meeting standards in mathematics, DJ stated that students are receiving reteaching, but there are very limited research-based interventions for tier 1 in math. DJ analyzes data

cohort-by-cohort, looks at grade-level trends, longitudinal growth, and decrease in performance. DJ states that the professional learning opportunities that are available for teachers to support student achievement on ISAT's are the effective use of formative and summative data to drive instruction. Taft selects resources to ensure fulfillment of the Common Core Standards by saying that the textbook is a resource and not the curriculum, and makes use of supplementary resources. Interventions, supports and professional development opportunities that are available to support Common Core implementation include incorporating mathematics in all curriculums, use of staff workshops and presentations, and targeting effective implementation of the 8 mathematics standards. Currently, Taft has 15% of our students in Special Education classes. Finally, when asked how the district is preparing to handle the demands of the PARCC assessment in regards to administration and student preparation, DJ said we are utilizing staff development, upgrading our technology infrastructure and hardware, integrating mathematics and assessment, accumulating hands-on math materials, and having our third grade classes pilot the performance based assessment in mathematics.