RE-THINKING HOW SCHOOLS IMPROVE

A Brief Introduction to the Classroom-Focused Improvement Process

CFIP
“Every organization is perfectly designed to get the results it achieves.”

--W. Edwards Deming

Is your school “designed” to the specifications of the old or the new paradigm?
Data- and knowledge-driven schools and school districts use data for two major *but different* purposes:

- Accountability (to *prove*)
- Instructional decision making (to *improve*)
Data answer different questions.

**For accountability (data to prove)**

**SUMMATIVE:**
- “How many students passed?”
- “Who passed and who didn’t?”

**For improvement (data to improve)**

**FORMATIVE:**
- “What do the students know?”
- “What do the students not know and what are we going to do about it?”
Sources of Student Achievement Data

• External assessment data
• Benchmark or course-wide assessment data
• Individual teacher assessment data

The Hierarchy of Data for Accountability Purposes

External (State & National) Assessments

System Benchmark Assessments

Common School or Course Assessments

Classroom Assessments of Student Work
The Hierarchy of Data for Instructional Decision Making

Classroom Assessments of Student Work

Common School or Course Assessments

System Benchmark Assessments

External (State & National Assessments)
What does it take to “improve” a school?

“School improvement is most surely and thoroughly achieved when teachers engage in frequent, continuous, and increasingly concrete and precise talk about teaching practice . . . adequate to the complexities of teaching, [and] capable of distinguishing one practice and its virtue from another.”

--Judith Warren Little

Critical Teacher Behaviors in a Strong Professional Learning Community

1. Reflective dialogue
2. De-privatization of practice
3. Collective focus on student learning
4. Collaboration
5. Shared norms and values

--Kruse, Louis, and Bryk, 1994
It is becoming increasingly clear that schools improve because student performance improves; and student performance improves because teachers at the classroom level:

- Carefully assess student learning
- Examine the results of their assessments
- Implement needed enrichments and interventions for students
- Consider the implications of assessment results for their future teaching
- Adjust their practice accordingly
The Classroom-Focused Improvement Process:

• Uses real-time, current data
• Is specific to each course or grade level
• Incorporates collaborative teaching teams and individual teachers
• Addresses individual students’ needs
• Brings together data from several assessment sources
• Results in instructional improvements that can be integrated into daily lesson plans (“job embedded”)

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The Classroom-Focused Improvement Process (cont.):

• Provides for in-class enrichments and interventions that can be re-directed frequently if they are not working
• Helps teachers perceive the data analysis process as a worthwhile use of their time
• Values the input of teachers as the most important instructional decision makers
The Six Easy CFIP Steps

1. Be sure everyone understands the data being analyzed.
2. Pose a question or two that the data can answer.
3. Look for class-wide patterns in the data.
4. Act on the class patterns, including re-teaching, if needed.
5. Address individual students’ needs for enrichment and intervention that remain after re-teaching.
6. Decide on and implement at least one way that instruction will be improved in the next unit.
CFIP Step 1: Understand the data source.

Build ASSESSMENT LITERACY with questions like these:

- What assessment is being described in this data report? What were the characteristics (the “quarks”) of the assessment?
- Who participated in the assessment? Who did not? Why?
- Why was the assessment given? When?
- What do the terms in the data report mean?
CFIP Step 2: Identify the questions that can be answered by the data.

- All data analyses should be designed to answer a question.
- Unless there is an important question to answer, there is no need for a data analysis.
CFIP Step 3: Look for class-wide patterns in a single data source.

- What do you see over and over again in the data?
- What are the strengths of the class? What knowledge and skills do the students have?
- What are their weaknesses of the class? What knowledge and skills do the students lack?
CFIP Step 4: Act on the class-wide patterns.

- What instructional factors might have contributed to the class-wide patterns?
- What will we do to address patterns of class needs?
- How and when will we reassess to determine student progress and the effectiveness of our instruction?
Six Easy CFIP Steps

CFIP is an ongoing circular—not linear—process.

The first CFIP dialogue might only get this far:
1. Make sure everyone understands the data being considered.
2. Identify a question or two that the data can answer.
3. Look for class-wide patterns in the data.
4. Decide what to do about the class patterns.

In many situations, the CFIP dialogue will then be put on hold until any needed re-teaching occurs.
CFIP Step 5: Drill down to individual students. Identify needed differentiations.

- Which students need enrichments and interventions?
- On what should enrichments and interventions focus?
- How will we deliver interventions so that students do not lose future direct instruction?
- How will we assess the effectiveness of the interventions and enrichments?
CFIP Step 5: Drill down to individual students. Identify needed differentiations.

- Which students need enrichments and interventions?
- On what should enrichments and interventions focus?
- How will we deliver interventions so that students do not lose future direct instruction?
- How will we assess the effectiveness of the interventions and enrichments?
CFIP Step 6: Reflect on the reasons for student performance. Identify and implement instructional changes in the next unit.

How will we change instruction in our next unit? Content focus . . . Pacing . . . Teaching methods . . . Assignments . . .
CFIP Step 6: Determine how we will measure the effects of our new instructional strategy.

- How will we measure the success of our new instructional strategy?
- When will we review the data again to determine the success of the enrichments and interventions?
- What do the data *not* tell us? What questions about student achievement do we still need to answer?
- How will we attempt to answer these questions?
- How well did the CFIP session go? How could we make our next meeting more effective?
Strive for “deep implementation” of the strategies and interventions your data analysis leads you to.
What Does “Deep Implementation” of Data Analysis Look Like?

- There is a limit on number of initiatives a school undertakes at a time. (Reeves says six is max. I think six is too many.)
- 90% of the appropriate faculty is participating.
- There is widespread understanding of reasons for the data analysis process, even if there is not complete “buy-in.”
- The data analysis process is discussed regularly at staff meetings.
What Does “Deep Implementation” of Data Analysis Look Like?

• The data analysis process is written into the school plan.
• There is ongoing coaching provided.
• “Adult” data are collected to monitor implementation of the data analysis process on a regular basis.
• There is continuous reflection on and improvement of the data analysis process.
Pre-conditions for successful implementation of the Classroom-Focused Improvement Process (CFIP)

- Cohesive and collaborative team which shares common subject matter and common assessments
- Common planning time for the team at a minimum of one hour twice weekly, of which one hour is devoted exclusively to CFIP
- Principal who is a strong instructional leader and who is comfortable with concept of shared leadership
- Norms to guide the team’s process of collaborative data analysis
- Autonomy for the team to adjust teaching practices and interventions based on data from assessments of their students’ learning
- Use of short-cycle, common assessments by the team
- Ongoing professional development to enhance the team’s capacity to continually adjust teaching practice in response to student data
Caveats about CFIP

• It is a paradigm shift from the traditional lesson planning format.
• It is not easy, especially at first.
• Teams should follow the steps faithfully until they become second nature.
• Teams should expect mistakes and imprecision in the data.
• The results are worth the effort.

✓ “CFIP transforms a school.”

- Mike Markoe, Washington County Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Education
THANK YOU for your engagement in this “refresher” on the CFIP process!