Manuscript Title:

Developing District-wide Expertise in Leaders' Ability to Analyze and Improve Instructional Practice

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ABSTRACT

This manuscript reports on the initial findings from a study of two district's efforts to improve the instructional leadership of principals, and lead teacher coaches in collaboration with an external support provider who provided learning-focused professional development for the districts' leaders. Researchers collected pre- and post-intervention data on forty-four (44) principals and district coaches from within the two districts, one a mid-sized urban district in Southern California, and the other a small town district from northwest Washington State, engaged in a strategic partnership with an external support organization that provided coaching and professional development sessions focused on improving leaders knowledge and skills to analyze instruction and lead instructional improvement. The study specifically inquired whether leaders' ability to analyze a videotaped lesson segment changed over the course of one year's work in this process. Leaders viewed a brief lesson segment on two separate occasions, approximately one year apart, and wrote narrative responses about what they observed that were analyzed by researchers. A research-based rubric for assessing responses was developed featuring thirteen sub-dimensions of instructional practice. Analysis of leaders' responses indicate that statistically significant improvements occurred in their individual abilities to critically analyze instruction over the course of the study, suggesting leaders in the context for study improved in their ability to analyze instruction and consider ways that their analysis informed comments to teachers and shaped potential decisions about professional development.

INTRODUCTION

What happens when a school district intentionally sets out to develop specific aspects of the instructional leadership knowledge and skills of its leaders? Can a focused intervention, aided over time by a strategic partnership with an external support provider, change how principals and coaches perceive instructional practice, and how they think about and plan feedback for teachers about instruction? This paper reports on the results of a study designed to assess collective change in leaders' levels of expertise with the analysis of instructional practice, and the means they develop to provide feedback for teachers about that practice. The study focuses on leaders in two school districts—a mid-sized urban southern California school district, and the other located in a small town in northwest Washington. Both districts intentionally set out to improve instructional leadership practice system-wide, in ongoing partnership with an external support organization which provided professional development for leaders focused on developing instructional and leadership expertise of district administrators, principals, and lead teacher coaches in the system.

PROBLEM OF PRACTICE

The growth of standards-based accountability systems, coupled with greater attention to data collection and analysis, has put the improvement of instructional practice at the top of many school district agendas. Efforts to get leaders more involved in improving the "core technology" of teaching and learning run throughout most of the recent accounts of district reform. School districts are investing heavily in instructional improvement initiatives, driven in part by accountability pressures, but also by a new sense of optimism that districts can make a difference in the quality of teaching and learning experienced by young people. The optimism has some basis in actual evidence (e.g., Darling-Hammond, Hightower, Husbands, LaFors, Young, & Christopher, 2005; Hightower, Knapp, Marsh, & McLaughlin, 2002; Spillane, 1996; Honig, 2001; O'Day, 2002), and especially in the much analyzed and discussed cases of Community School District 2 in New York City (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Fink & Resnick, 1998; Resnick & Glennan, 2002; Stein & D'Amico, 2002; Stein, D'Amico, & Israel, 1999; D'Amico, Harwell, Stein, & van den Heuvel, 2001), and the related reform efforts over the last six

years in the San Diego City Schools (Darling-Hammond et al., 2005; Hightower, 2002, 2001; Stein, Hubbard, & Mehan, 2004). From research on these cases and some other recent studies of district instructional reform (e.g., Togneri & Anderson, 2003; Corcoran & Christman, 2002; David & Shields, 2001; Snipes, Doolittle, & Herlihy, 2002) come useful concepts and initial "existence proofs" that districts can play a constructive and powerful role in guiding and advancing teaching practice and ultimately student learning.

Knowledge and Skills Leaders Need to Improve Instruction.

Evidence to date suggests that most successful district change efforts place heavy emphasis on shaping the work done by central office administrators, principals, lead teacher coaches, and other leadership personnel to make instructional improvement a top priority. Attempts to define elements of leadership designed to improve teaching and learning date back to the 1980's concept of *instructional leadership*. Leithwood & Duke (1999) analyzed key literature on educational leadership published during the period of 1985-1995 and defined instructional leadership as focusing on "the behaviors of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students." Others writing during this period of time note the importance of what was termed "instructional management" (Hallinger & Murphy, 1985) as a broad category of the work leaders do that has the potential to impact student learning.

But the instructional leadership rhetoric of the 1980's and 90's floated above the specifics of classroom practice, and while it helped focus the field on the improvement of instruction as a key concern for leaders, it often failed to provide explicit descriptions of the actual work, making it difficult to assess the extent to which the concept meant the same thing to all those writing about it (Foster, 1986).

More recent studies have worked to clarify this picture, attempting to capture more of the nuances of the work leaders do to improve instruction. Blasé & Blasé (2004), for example, asked teachers to define the strategies that leaders use that help them learn to improve instructional practice. Five strategies emerged, suggesting leaders are helpful when they make suggestions, give feedback, model instruction, use inquiry as opposed to prescribing solutions, and solicit teachers' thinking and opinions. Yet, once again, such studies didn't go much deeper in peeling back the layers of the expert

knowledge and skills needed to do this work--attempting to capture the specific nature or focus of feedback, suggestions, or what the leaders targeted for inquiry into instruction.

Recent thinking and research has proven helpful in defining elements of this special kind of expertise. Perhaps the effort that comes closest to the mark to date, is the work done by Stein & Nelson (2003) to craft a more nuanced and specific definition of the various dimensions of what constitutes expertise in leadership of instructional improvement. Stein & Nelson (2003) conducted case studies of instructionally-focused school and district leaders that led to the development of the idea of *leadership content knowledge.* This kind of knowledge includes some degree of subject matter knowledge (for example, of either mathematics, or literacy, or both), specific knowledge of how children learn that subject, as well as pedagogical knowledge of how to teach the subject. The concept also embodies the idea that leaders must possess knowledge about how individual teachers learn to teach more effectively, and need skills in observing instruction and providing feedback that is helpful in developing teacher learning. Stein & Nelson suggest that, as expectations increase for them to improve teaching and learning in their schools, leaders:

> must be able to know strong instruction when they see it, to encourage it when they don't, and to set the conditions for continuous academic learning among their professional staffs (Stein & Nelson, 2003).

It follows that a grounded description of expertise in leading instructional improvement, involves what Stein & Nelson call "postholing"–the development of deep knowledge of content and pedagogy in at least one subject matter content area—along with a parallel set of leadership skills to translate this knowledge in discussions with teachers, so as to be able to support and guide their ongoing efforts to improve practice.

Developing District-wide Expertise in Leading Instructional Improvement

The leadership expertise needed for the improvement of instruction is, as the discussion above suggests, a complex phenomenon. It requires the development of a mix of subject matter content knowledge, knowledge of various means for how children learn that content, and pedagogical knowledge regarding ways to teach the subject matter content. As well, this particular kind of expertise requires knowledge about how

individual teachers learn to teach more effectively, high level skills with observing for those elements in the instructional process, and the ability to craft feedback to teachers about what is observed that supports their current practice, and at the same time challenges them to improve. Suppose a school district tackled improvement of instruction as the central leadership challenge to be addressed, and wanted to develop the expertise of their leaders to do this work? What strategies might a district employ to realize improvement of this kind? And, how would they determine if leaders' expertise was improving?

The primary mechanisms through which leaders might influence improvement in instructional practice occur through observation of instruction in classrooms, and dialogue with teachers about what was observed, providing feedback designed to stimulate and support teachers' efforts to improve their practice. A district seeking to strengthen leaders' knowledge and skills with this process would need to intentionally structure professional development that simultaneously focused on deepening leaders' knowledge of content and pedagogy in key subject matter fields (like literacy instruction, for example), developing leaders' skills with observation and dialogue about instruction, and helping leaders plan and exercise specific leadership strategies and actions.

It also stands to reason that a given district might not possess sufficient internal resources to develop such a program of professional development for leaders, and might choose to seek external help in developing a grounded strategy for stimulating instructional improvement expertise. In the paragraphs that follow, we briefly describe the two district contexts that form the focus of this research. Each district is engaged in a collaborative partnership with an external support organization in a concerted effort to improve leaders' instructional leadership expertise in an ongoing way, over time, with focused support that aims at deepening pedagogical content knowledge and leadership skills.

CONTEXT

District Setting #1: Norwalk-LaMirada SD

The Norwalk-LaMirada Unified School District[1], located in southern California, serves over 24,000 students including 18 elementary schools, 7 middle schools, and 3 comprehensive high schools. In addition, the district has an award winning continuation high school, two adult schools, and a full site dedicated to Head Start/State Pre-school with satellite classes at other sites. The district mission statement reads:

> The Norwalk-LaMirada Unified School District, in collaboration with parents and community, shall develop in all students the knowledge, understanding, skills, and attitudes to empower them to become life-long learners and productive citizens in an ever-changing world. This will be accomplished in a climate that promotes high expectations, strives to meet individual needs and values diversity.

The district employs over 1,300 certificated staff, and nearly 4,000 classified personnel. The ethnicity of the district's student population (2005-06 school year) is as follows:

American Indian	.3%
Asian	4.3%
African American	3.7%
Filipino	3.0%
Hispanic	73.2%
Pacific Islander	.6%
White	14.7%
Multiple/No resp	.2%

40% of Norwalk-LaMirada Unified SD students are eligible for free and reduced price lunch, and 18% of district students speak a language other than English.

In November 2003, the Norwalk-LaMirada Unified SD Board of Education established a literacy goal for the students in the district. This goal states that 9 out of 10 students will read at grade level by the end of 2007. While this is an ambitious goal, the Board believes that every student has the right to achieve at their highest level and that literacy is the key to the future. The Board has supported this goal by partnering with an external partner organization, the Center for Educational Leadership (CEL), from the University of Washington (see description that follows), who brings expertise in the form of coaches well-versed in literacy instruction and leadership. These expert coaches are

[1] The brief case description of the Norwalk-LaMirada School district was adapted primarily from materials located on the district website, http://www.nlmusd.k12.ca.us

training the district's principals, central office administrators, teacher leaders and district literacy coaches in classroom instructional strategies, and leadership strategies, designed to increase reading success for all students. The District, with CEL guidance and support, hired its own literacy coaches (new position) to work with all the district's classroom teachers on instructional improvement. Demonstration classrooms have been established at each site for teachers and administrators to observe and practice new and/or expanded instructional strategies. The Board has also allocated new monies targeted for the establishment and maintenance of current classroom libraries. Intentions are to expand this classroom library effort each year.

Data from Norwalk-LaMirada were collected at the beginning of the district's second year in partnership with CEL, and again at the beginning of the third year of the partnership.

District Context #2

The Marysville School District[2], located in northwest Washington, serves nearly 12,000 students including 11 elementary schools, 1 middle schools, 1 large, comprehensive high school, and 3 smaller, alternative and theme-based secondary schools. In addition to the city of Maryville, the district serves the nearby Tulalip tribe, contributing to a relatively high percentage of Native American students compared with surrounding districts. A message from the district's school board culled from the Marysville website speaks to the board's commitment to serving all children well:

> The members of the board of education share a common vision for the Marysville School District. We seek to find ways to provide not just an adequate education for our children, but an excellent one. It is our belief that every child in our community deserves the very best educational experience possible. Every child has the potential to achieve success in life if given the right tools to do so. As a community we can help to see that this occurs by staying involved with the school, in the classroom and in special programs. We must constantly help each other stay focused on that most important goal, the education and support of children in our community.

The district employs almost 700 certificated teachers, and a student population of

[2] The brief case description of the Norwalk-LaMirada School district was adapted primarily from materials located on the district website, http://www.nlmusd.k12.ca.us

which 35% are eligible for free or reduced price meals. The ethnicity of the district's student population (2005-06 school year) is as follows:

American Indian	8.6%
Asian	6.6%
African American	2.3%
Hispanic	7.8%
White	74.4%

5.6% of district students are enrolled as transitional bilingual, according to Washington State OSPI records.

In 2003, Marysville endured the longest teacher strike in Washington State history –49 days. Following the strike, and subsequent changes in district leadership, Dr. Larry Nyland was appointed as superintendent. Under Nyland's leadership, the district has rebounded from the strike year, and has made progress toward collective goals, including passage of a large construction bond for the purpose of building a new high school. The Marysville board has also supported Nyland's efforts to strike a partnership with the Center for Educational Leadership (CEL), from the University of Washington, employing a similar strategy to the situation in Norwalk-LaMirada. In conjunction with CEL coaches provided in the partnership, Nyland and his district administrative team are bringing an instructional leadership focus to the district's work, focusing on the development of literacy instruction. Nyland was named "Superintendent of the Year" in Washington State in 2006 as a result of his work to date in the Marysville district.

Importantly, data from Marysville were collected at the beginning of the district's first year in partnership with CEL, and again at the beginning of the second year of the partnership. This is significant in that, at the time of the second data sample, Marysville leaders had experienced only one year of partnership work with CEL, as opposed those in Norwalk-LaMirada, who had experienced two full years of the partnership work.

External Partner Organization

The Center for Educational Leadership (CEL), located at the University of Washington provides on-the-ground assistance to partner school districts aimed at building leaders' instructional leadership skills and knowledge, with the intention of helping those districts close achievement gaps through the promotion of more powerful

instructional practice. CEL partners with a broad range of mid- and large-scale urban or semi-urban, and rural districts, and serves as the external partner for the districts that are the focus for this study. CEL's work with school and district leaders in these sites provided a ready-made laboratory for exploring instructional improvement work, and testing assumptions about whether and how leaders' skills with critical analysis and reflection on instructional practice improve over time.

The heart of CEL's efforts is a theory of action that features a continuous relationship between districts and external support organization and a contingent, flexible approach to collaboratively constructing an improvement strategy, rather than bringing to the district a package of pre-developed, already "proven" reform ideas. At the same time, the CEL approach takes maximum advantage of the wisdom of improvement practice that has been accumulated in heavily researched and documented sites, including New York City District 2 and San Diego, and it does so often by using individuals who have worked in these other sites. Many of the coaches employed by CEL were teachers, teacher leaders, or administrators in District 2 and San Diego during the period of time that Anthony Alvardo's leadership was influential in shaping the instructional focus in those district two sites.

Alvarado's ideas about the importance of developing leaders' ability to deeply understand and provide direction about instructional practice are consistent with CEL's philosophy. CEL Executive Director, Stephen Fink, relies on the notion that, "You can't lead what you don't know" in shaping the Center's work with leaders. The approach used by CEL includes large group instruction for leaders focused on deepening their pedagogical and content knowledge in key areas (namely literacy and mathematics), as well as small group and individualized coaching sessions lead by CEL coaches, observing and discussing instructional practice in schools within the district. These sessions occur frequently, over time. In addition, CEL project directors work with the superintendent and other district leaders to examine how systems level policies, practices and structures can be improved to support instructional improvement across the district. Appendix B includes a version of the partnership prospectus that guides CEL-district arrangments. As noted earlier, Marysville SD is entering its second year, and Norwalk-LaMirada Unified School District its third year, in partnership with CEL.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This frame and context description leads to some questions for research designed to determine whether observable growth in leaders' expertise with instructional improvement is occurring in the district site:

- What changes occur in leaders' knowledge and skills, if any, from the CEL-district partnership efforts to deepen their instructional improvement expertise?

- More specifically, how, if at all, do Norwalk-LaMirada Unified and Marysville leaders' ability to critically analyze instruction and plan feedback for teachers deepen over time, in the context of a district-wide, grounded intervention focused on improving these abilities?

RESEARCH DESIGN

In order to explore the questions above, researchers designed a study that featured a pre- and post- assessment of principals and coaches' abilities to analyze a classroom lesson. Principals and coaches were asked to watch a brief, fifteen-minute videotaped segment of classroom instruction in literacy, as if they had dropped into the classroom for a visit. Elementary principals and coaches observed an elementary classroom lesson segment; secondary administrators observed a ninth grade literacy lesson segment. Participants were asked to employ whatever means they would typically use to record what they observed in the classroom lesson segment, including taking notes in writing or on their laptop computers. Following their observation of the videotaped lesson, participants were asked to respond in writing to the following three questions:

1. *What do you notice about teaching and learning in this classroom?*

2. *Given your response to Question #1, describe the follow-up conversation you would have with this teacher.*

3. *Imagine that the teacher you just observed is a member of your current school staff. What implications for professional development, if any, does this observation suggest?*

Participants responded to these questions in writing, and could rely on any notes they had taken during the course of the observation to help shape their responses.

Pre- and post-assessments were conducted in each district site. Researchers collected the narrative responses at each point, and assigned numeric codes that masked the identity of the participants for purposes of the analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

The plan for data analysis included the development of a means for scoring the narratives responses that was founded on a research-based conceptual definition of powerful instructional practice. The concepts were used to operationalize a thirteen dimension rubric for analyzing the data (rubric is included as Appendix A). The effort to develop the rubric focused on defining a sub-set of key dimensions of instructional practice that an expert observer of instruction might be expected to focus on in analyzing a lesson.

The thirteen dimensions were grouped under four broad headings that defined broad areas of instructional practice: Lesson Purpose, Student Engagement, Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment, and Classroom Culture and Environment. Table 1 displays the four broad categories and the thirteen sub-dimensions. The sub-dimensions included:

Table 1. Categories and Sub-Dimensions of Instructional Improvement Rubric

Category	Sub Dimensions
PURPOSE	(1) Standards
	(2) Teaching Point
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT	(3) Who's Doing the Work?
	(4) Student Engagement Strategies
	(5) Student Talk
CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGY, & ASSESSMENT	(6) Curriculum
	(7) Teaching Approach/Strategy
	(8) Scaffolds for Learning
	(9) Teaching Decisions
	(10) Assessment
CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT & CULTURE	(11) Use of Physical Space
	(12) Classroom Routines
	(13) Classroom Work Culture

(1) standards for learning; (2) teaching point or lesson purpose; (3) an emphasis on who is doing the work in the classroom; (4) student engagement strategies used during the lesson; (5) the nature of student talk in the lesson; (6) focus on the curriculum used in the

lesson and its appropriateness; (7) the teaching approach or strategies used; (8) scaffolds that support the learning; (9) teaching/teacher decision-making during the lesson; (10) assessments employed to understand whether students were learning; (11) the use of physical space to support learning in the classroom; (12) the nature of classroom routines that support learning; and (13) the nature of the work culture in the classroom.

Within each of the thirteen dimensions, four developmental categories, ranging from novice to expert, were developed to guide the analysis. Operational definitions of the progression of expertise were developed with the assistance of expert coaches. Table 2 displays the general guidelines used in making decisions about the construction of the expert-novice continuum in each sub-dimension.

The section that follows provides a detailed account of the way in which the analysis was conducted.

Table 2. General Description-Expert/Novice Continuum

1=Novice	*2=Emerging competence*	*3=Developing expertise*	*4=Expert*
• No mention of the phenomenon of interest; or • Complete misconception about the phenomenon of interest	• Noticing some of the structures of teaching (charts & room arrangements), but not the "whys" or "hows" underneath those structures, with regard to the phenomenon of interest. • Non-analytical recounting of what transpired; • Superficial level of understanding of the phenomenon of interest; • Naming activities using the "right" language; • Does not discuss or elaborate on observation of activities	• Appropriate mention of the phenomenon of interest; identifies many key concepts or ideas appropriately; • Expresses wonder or questions teaching decisions or thinking behind teaching decisions • Developing understanding that teaching decisions impact student outcomes, and how this occurs; • Noticing more subtle intentional teaching decisions; elements of structure and rationale for why • Discusses/elaborates on notions raised in "emerging competence"	• Demonstrates all of the markers of category three, plus additional subtleties of teaching and learning process related to the phenomenon of interest; identifies and acknowledges more layers of complexity; • Analytically unpacks teaching decisions • Identifies complexities in connections between various elements of teaching and learning; • Considers teaching decisions in larger context (standards, unit of study);

ANALYTIC PROCESS

As noted above, each response was scored on thirteen sub-dimensions organized under four broad headings: (1) Purpose; (2) Student Engagement; (3) Curriculum, Pedagogy & Assessment; and, (4) Classroom Environment &Culture. A four point, developmental scale was created within each sub-dimensions, (1=novice, 2=emerging

competence, 3=developing expertise, and 4=expert) and two raters assigned scores of 1-4 on each sub-dimension based on their analysis. Where raters differed on their initial ratings, the differences were explored, and a consensus score was assigned based on the discussion. In the paragraphs that follow, we provide more detail about the analytic rubric, providing specific information about each sub-dimension, and illustrating the scoring process with examples from the data.

PURPOSE

The first broad category of *purpose* deals with elements of instruction focused on how the lesson connects to standards (whether stated or not stated), outcomes for student work, and how the purpose of the lesson connects to transferable knowledge/skill. The analysis looked for evidence that responses focused on how the lesson purpose aligned with teaching decisions, whether the lesson purpose was appropriate for students, how the lesson linked to broader purposes (e.g., problem-solving, citizenship, independence, quality of life), or how the purpose of the observed lesson fit into the larger landscape of teaching. Two sub-scales, one regarding standards and the other on teaching point, were developed and used in the analysis. More detailed descriptions of those two sub-dimensions follow.

(1) Standards

The first sub-category focused on respondents' discussion of standards related to the lesson purpose. A "novice" (level 1) response made no explicit mention of how the observed lesson connected to standards (e.g., state benchmarks) or outcomes (e.g., student work products, culminating assessment, etc.). A response illustrative of "emerging competence" (level 2) mentioned or referenced standards and/or outcomes, but absent a connection to observed teaching and student learning. In other words, a level 2 response did not mention how the lesson observed matched the lesson purpose, or did not raise a question about this connection. A level 3 response, signaling "developing expertise," discussed the relationship between standards, whether stated or not stated, outcomes, and student learning, and included some discussion connecting the lesson to an established standard or outcome, such as:

> *If this lesson or this teacher represented a group of teachers on my staff, I would want to plan around the standards and look at implications for teasing them out, with an ear for tying standards to read alouds.*

This response signals that the observer understands the potential for standards to inform an instructional approach, and vice versa, and that this may be an important focus for teachers in designing lessons. An "expert" response (level 4) would move beyond the mention of this connection to critically analyze lesson content related to standards and outcomes, and raise questions about teacher decision-making (e.g., developmental appropriateness of a given standard for student learning), and perhaps pose alternatives grounded in evidence where that was warranted.

(2) Teaching Point

The second sub-category focused on respondents' discussion of the teaching point of the lesson they observed. A "novice" response made no mention or recognition of teaching point, lesson purpose, how lesson connects to transferable skills, or indicated a misconception of same. A response signaling "emerging competence" (level 2) mentioned or identified the teaching point, but *absent* an acknowledgement of the connection to broader purpose (e.g., standards, outcomes, transferable knowledge or skill). A response illustrating "developing expertise" discussed the lesson's teaching point, took steps to consider the connection to broader purpose (e.g., standards, outcomes, transferable knowledge or skill) and whether teaching decisions match the stated purpose.

> *Teacher is providing feedback on how students are pointing out the symbolism . . . Students were able to identify author's use of silence to symbolize a chasm in communication . . .Teacher asked students to consider the use of the cracker, Matzo, and what purpose it served in the story . . . The big idea in the lesson appeared to me to be: "Authors sometimes use objects, people, or events to symbolize bigger ideas and concepts."*

Finally, an "expert" response on this sub-dimension demonstrated the ability to critically analyze the lesson's teaching point, in relation to broader purpose, raised questions about teacher moves or decision-making (e.g., developmentally appropriate, purpose stated or

not stated), and made connections from the lesson purpose to a larger context (e.g., unit of study, life lesson) —what has come before and where students need to go next.

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

The second broad category of the analysis dealt with ways in which the responses focused on *student engagement*. This emphasis looked for evidence that respondents paid attention to who was doing the "work" (e.g., reading, thinking, writing, meaning-making) during the course of the lesson, and the intellectual substance of that work. This focus also assessed the extent to which responses discussed strategies used to facilitate student participation and meaning making in the lesson (e.g. small group work, strategies to facilitate student talk, etc), and the nature of that student talk, in light of understanding the role of talk in meaning making, language development, and as a tool for assessment. Three sub-dimensions were analyzed, including (1) who is doing the work in the lesson, (2) strategies for student engagement, and (3) the nature of student talk during the lesson. More specific details about each sub-dimension follow.

(3) "Who is Doing the Work"

The third sub-category looks for indicators that the respondent has considered who is doing the work (of reading, thinking, meaning-making, etc.) and what is the nature and intellectual substance of that work. A "novice" included no mention of who was doing what during the lesson or included a misconception of the same (e.g, equating compliant behavior with engagement). A response signaling "emerging competence" would include some comment about who is doing the work without mention of the intellectual substance of that work (e.g. "Students are engaged in discussion." or "It is a student-centered lesson.") A response signaling "developing expertise" discusses the nature and intellectual substance of student work, grounded in some evidence from the text. In other words, the response included comments regarding the intellectual substance of what the teacher and students were doing. . .

> *The teacher chunked the text so that students could do their own thinking around the ideas presented. They were able to talk to a partner to help them form theories, opinions and connections to the text.*

. . .and backed assertions with evidence from the lesson.

> *[The teacher] also used prompts to get students to think beyond the literal, such as, "Could we take that idea a step further?" I noticed she had students go back to the text. . .to think about the specific piece that was important to the deeper meaning.*

An "expert" response would take this one step further, raising questions about teacher decision-making, critiquing teacher moves based on evidence of the lesson, and offering alternatives, where appropriate.

(4) Student Engagement Strategies

The fourth sub-category focuses on the techniques to encourage student engagement and participation. A "novice" response made no mention of factors that encouraged or inhibited engagement. A response signaling "emerging competence" identified strategies to encourage participation (e.g. group work, turn and talk, think-pair-share). A response signaling "developing expertise" took this a step further and considered these strategies as opportunities for meaning-making.

> *I would consider modeling for this teacher and others how to pace a discussion and embed time for pair/share in the discussion to allow for more students to participate while the thinking work is going on.*

An "expert" response critically analyzed the efficacy of the strategies employed in relation to evidence of student meaning-making, raised questions about teacher decision-making and offered alternatives, where appropriate.

(5) Nature of Student Talk

Sub-category five focuses on the nature and substance of student talk. Responses ranged from "novice," which made no mention of student talk, to those that identified and considered the substance of talk. A response signaling "emerging competence" noticed student talk as an end in and of itself, without consideration of the substance of that talk. A response signaling "developing expertise" discussed—either explicitly or implicitly—

student talk in relation to meaning-making, language development, and/or assessment, such as the following examples illustrate:

> *Students had an opportunity to rehearse their thoughts with a partner prior to the classroom discussion.*
>
> *Students were able to make connections from this text to other texts they previously studies with similar themes.*

An "expert" response would have critically analyzed the student talk in relation to evidence of meaning-making, language development, and/or assessment, raised questions about teacher decision-making based on that evidence, and offered alternatives, where appropriate.

CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGY, & ASSESSMENT

The third broad category in the analysis deals with issues of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment observed in the lesson. This emphasis looks for evidence of respondents' focus on the choices made by the teacher in selecting curriculum materials (e.g., texts, etc.), and whether those curriculum materials were appropriately challenging for students, in relation to the purpose, pedagogical content knowledge and knowledge of texts. This category also focuses on teacher decisions about instructional approaches/strategies, considers the rationale for use of those strategies, as well as the repertoire of teacher moves that scaffolded student learning during the lesson observed. We also assessed responses to determine whether observers focused on how students were supported toward increasing independence (e.g., what is the "transferable skill" and how are students set up to be successful), and the extent to which responses discussed whether teacher decisions were assessment driven, based on knowledge of students, standards and curriculum materials. In an effort to adequately capture the complexities associated with these dimensions of teaching, this category was broken up into five sub-dimensions: curriculum, instructional strategy or approach, scaffolding, teacher decision-making, and assessment.

(6) Curriculum

The sixth sub-dimension analyzes respondents attention to curriculum used in the observed lesson. Observations regarding the curriculum employed in the lesson ranged from no mention at all, scored as "novice," to responses that named curriculum ("emerging competence"), and in some cases went on to discuss perceptions of curriculum. For example, in describing elements of the conversation that this observer would have with the teacher after the observation, the following response was scored as evidence of "emerging expertise" (level 3) on this sub-dimension:

> *I wanted to commend you on your text selection. You selected a text that lent itself to critical thinking and reflection about author's purpose and symbolism that seemed to be just right for the students I observed participating in the discussion.*

This response goes beyond simply noticing that a text was employed to discuss additional observations about how the text was a useful choice (text "lent itself to critical thinking and reflection about author's purpose"). A further elaboration of what specifically made the text "just right" for the students, or the formulation of questions designed to prompt the teacher's thinking about why the text was "just right" would have suggested an even greater level of expertise.

(7) Instructional Strategy or Approach

The seventh sub-dimension assesses respondents' attention to instructional strategies or approaches in the lesson. Participant responses regarding the instructional approach or strategy employed in the lesson they observed ranged from no mention of these issues, or misinterpretation of the approach employed ("novice") to responses demonstrating "emerging competence" that involve naming the primary instructional approach (e. g., read aloud, shared reading, interactive writing, independent writing), and/or strategies (ie., modeling, charting, think aloud), but absent discussion of evidence from the lesson that would indicate deeper understanding (appropriateness of the approach using supporting details). Those responses illustrating "developing expertise" discussed the instructional approach(es) and strategies, and elaborated characteristics of these in discussion. For example, one response, scored as "developing expertise" (level 3), discussed the lesson approach this way:

> *There was a definite sense of direction to the lesson. She went from modeling to brainstorming with students to turning and talking. All the while, the teacher roamed the room to hear student responses. The teacher even took notes as student responses were shared with the class . . . Perhaps the concept (of author's stamp) could be better dealt with in a common text.*

While this response did not specifically "name" an approach (e.g., shared reading, guided reading, etc.), it does discuss some of the specific instructional strategies that the teacher used to try to meet the teaching point of the lesson. A level 4, or "expert," response on the rubric would have added a deeper analysis of these instructional strategies in relation to student learning needs and interests, the lesson purpose, or how the approaches and strategies move students toward independence, and also may have raised questions about teacher decision-making (e.g., developmental appropriateness of standard for student learning), or pose alternatives to the strategies chosen, grounded in evidence.

(8) Scaffolding

The eighth sub-dimension focuses on respondents' attention to the scaffolding of student learning in the lesson, including resources and practices that support the learning. A "novice" response made no mention of scaffolding or levels of support. A response illustrating "emerging competence" identified lesson structures (e.g., teacher modeling, or charts), but absent discussion of rationale and broader purpose of scaffolding for student learning. A "developing expert" identified and discussed teacher efforts to provide scaffolding and support (e.g., using language signaling "to/with/by" or "gradual release of responsibility"), or mentioned transferable skill or students working toward independence. An "expert" response analyzed planned teacher moves to provide scaffolding and support in relation to observed evidence of student learning, and identified and discussed "on the fly" teacher decisions. The expert may have also raised questions about teacher decision-making (e.g., developmental appropriateness of standard for student learning), or posed alternatives grounded in evidence. The following example was rated as "expert" on this sub-dimension:

> *The teacher . . . revoiced student's responses, for example, "So what you're saying is that (the problem) is much bigger than the lunch line." This helped to elevate some of the students' thinking. She also used prompts to get students to think beyond the literal such as, "Could we take that a step further?"*

This example illustrates ways in which teacher's effort to scaffold support was noted by the observer to be strategic or intentional in moving students towards increasing independence.

(9) Teacher Decision-making

The ninth sub-dimension assesses respondents' attention to teaching decisions made in the course of the lesson. Novice responses made no mention of teacher as decision-maker in the course of the observation narrative. A response illustrative of "emerging competence" mentioned some teacher moves, but absent any of the intentionality of the teacher as decision-maker in relation to evidence of student learning. Responses that made some mention or implication of teacher as decision-maker in relation to evidence of student learning, but with limited mention of teacher thinking underneath the teaching moves were rated as "developing expertise." Expert responses emphasized the teacher as decision-maker in relation to student learning needs, or analyzed the teacher's efforts to assess student understanding throughout the lesson, such as this "level 4" discussion of the conversation to be conducted with the teacher following the observed lesson:

> *My conversation would highlight the teacher moves that helped extend the conversation so that it went beyond just literal comprehension. I would complement her for these and talk how well she was able to get them to see the symbolism in the story . . . I noticed she had students go back to the text and asked students to think about the specific piece that was important to the deeper meaning of the text . . .I would ask what her next steps would be and how I could help her with those next steps.*

(10) Assessment

The tenth sub-dimension assesses respondents' attention to assessment issues observed in the lesson. A novice response made no mention of assessment. Responses

illustrative of "emerging competence" made some mention of opportunities for teacher to assess student learning, but absent evidence of student understanding, or how that assessment influenced the teacher's learning or decision-making. This kind of response may have equated assessment with checks for compliance or "right/wrong" answers. A response illustrating "emerging expertise" discussed opportunities for assessing student learning, and referenced what was learned from the assessment data, and how that learning influenced the teacher's decision-making. An emerging expert also may have displayed personal observations of how students were making meaning in the course of the lesson. An expert response analyzed the teacher's use of assessments or raised questions about the ways in which the teacher assessed learning in the moment, as illustrated in these example:

> *My teaching point would be two-fold. One would be to ask her if she was able to get a sense of who understood the text. She only met with one pair of students during the turn & talk, and I would ask her why she chose to sit with that one pair and would meeting with more students help her make more decisions in her lesson. Also, I would ask how she felt about the student responses. Did they go deep enough? How could they have gone deeper?*

This expert response highlights the observer's focus on evidence of student understanding, how assessments made about student learning influence teaching decisions in the course of a lesson, and raises potentially productive questions about teacher decision-making with regard to assessment, and alternatives to those decisions.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT & CULTURE

The fourth and final broad analytic category deals with issues of classroom environment and culture observed in the lesson. This aspect of instructional analysis deals with how the physical arrangement of the room is conducive to student learning, such as in discussion of the ways the teacher works the physical space to assess student progress and support learning, or how the teacher maximizes available time in service of learning. This broad emphasis is also concerned with the observers discussion of the ways in which language and interactions in the room emphasize "a culture of work" (e.g., the importance of intellectual work, or the seriousness and/or relevance of the work), and

how language and interactions convey a belief that all students are intellectually able (e.g., the teacher's emphasis on valuing approximations, privileging the asking of questions, and/or acknowledging that learning is an ongoing process).

(11) Physical Environment

The eleventh sub-dimension assesses respondents' attention to the way in the physical environment supports teaching and learning in the observation lesson. As with other sub-dimensions, no mention of the physical arrangement of the classroom was rated as a "novice" response. A response illustrating developing expertise mentioned the physical arrangement of the room (e.g., seating, charts), but absent substantive connections to student learning. "Emerging expertise" was signaled by respondents' discussion of how the physical arrangement of the room was conducive to student learning, and how the teacher worked the physical space to assess student progress and support learning.

> *The students were seated in amphitheater style seating, which facilitated easy communication in partner talk and accessibility by the teacher. . .There were many charts posted in the classroom (although I could not tell if they provided supports for this lesson).*

An "expert" response went deeper to analyze how the physical arrangement of the room/scaffolds is conducive to student learning, and to illustrate—with greater specificity—how the teacher worked the physical space to assess student progress and support learning, raised questions to probe understanding, and identified alternatives based on evidence from the lesson.

(12) Classroom Routines

Sub-dimension twelve assesses respondents' discussion of whether classroom routines to support learning are apparent in the observed lesson. No mention of classroom systems or routines, or misconceptions about same (mistaking control for learning) was rated as a "novice" response. A response illustrating emerging competence mentioned classroom systems and/or routines (e.g., wall posted instructions for turn &

talk) but absent substantive connections to student learning. A response signaling "developing expertise" discussed ways in which classroom systems and routines facilitated student ownership & student learning (e.g. students know what to do to conduct "turn & talk").

> *I noticed that certain routines have been established which facilitate student talking—routines like students moving their desks side by side and turning and talking.*
>
> *Students spoke out whenever they wanted to. [I'm] not sure if a protocol [for turn and talk] has been established.*

The "expert" response analyzes how classroom systems and routines facilitate student ownership & student learning, raises questions to probe understanding of current & prior teacher moves & decision-making (why this way vs. that way).

(13) Work Culture

The final sub-dimension assesses respondents' attention to the culture of student work in the classroom lesson observed. A novice response made no mention of work culture in the classroom (e.g., use of time, or reflections on teacher beliefs about student capabilities). A response illustrating emerging competence named something related to classroom work culture (e. g., use of time, nature of expectations). Emerging expertise was demonstrated in responses that discussed aspects of the classroom work culture, including evidence of how time usage, expectations, and/or language and interactions convey beliefs about students' capabilities and learning. The following example illustrates this emerging expertise;

> *There was extensive use of academic language . . . I also applaud the positive approach that the teacher displayed towards her students. "We know you are all maters of content." comes to mind as an illustration.*

A more expert response would have gone beyond discussion to analyze the culture of work in the classroom, including evidence of how time usage, expectations, and/or language and interactions convey beliefs about students' capabilities and learning, and

would also have raised questions about the classroom culture of work, including consideration of alternative approaches the teacher might take.

Each narrative response collected from participants in each district on the pre- and post- assessments was scored independently by two raters. Inter-rater reliability was assessed, and calculated to be .85. After scoring was conducted independently and the instrument assessed for reliability, the scorers reviewed discrepancies in the scoring, and resolved each difference with a consensus score. A series of statistical analyses, employing paired t-test of means, was conducted on the pre- and post- scores. A discussion of key findings from the data analysis follows.

FINDINGS

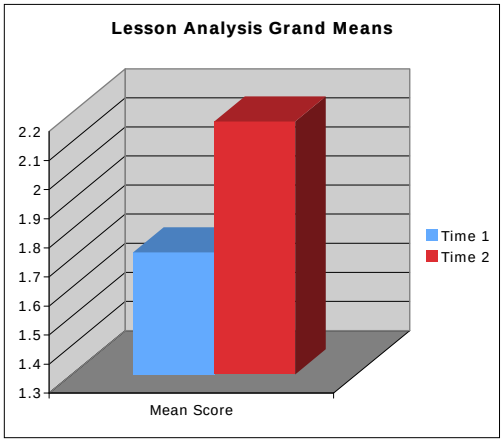
Analysis of the pre- and post-assessment data revealed a series of findings that are explored in the paragraphs that follow. We treat data from each district analysis separately, and then look across the findings for pursposes of drawing conclusions from the data.

DISTRICT #1: NORWALK LA-MIRADA

Comparison of Grand Means – Year 1 to Year 2

A grand mean of all responses from Year 1 and Year 2 was calculated. A paired t-test revealed a statistically significant difference in the scores on the narrative responses from Year 2 as compared with Year 1 ($p<.01$). Figure 1 displays a graphic representation of the change in overall mean scores. Overall mean score for principals and coaches combined improved from 1.72 on the pre-assessment (Year 1) to 2.17 on the post-assessment (Year 2).

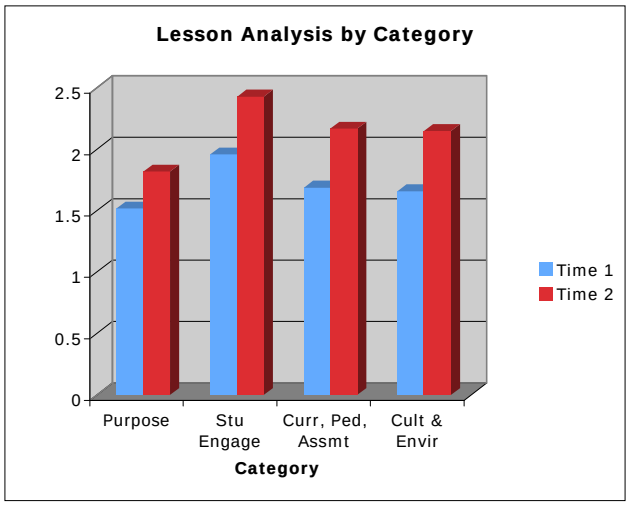
Figure 1. Norwalk LaMirada Grand Means



Comparison of Means by Broad Categories

A mean score for each broad category from the rubric (Lesson Purpose, Student Engagement, Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment, and Classroom Culture and Environment) was calculated for both the pre-and post assessment. Findings suggest statistically significant changes in all four broad rubric categories Time 1 to Time 2 ($p<.01$ in each case). Figure 2 shows a graphic representation of mean scores, Year 1 and Year 2, broken out by broad category.

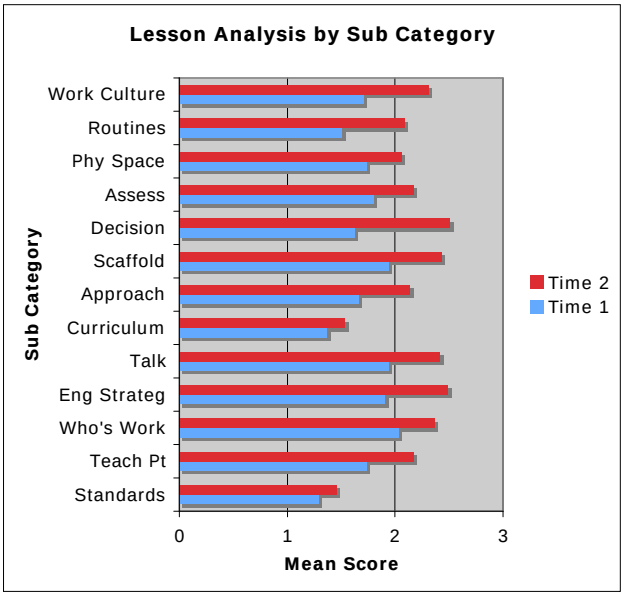
Figure 2. Norwalk LaMirada Lesson Analysis by Broad Rubric Category



Comparison of Means across Thirteen Sub-Dimensions

In addition to the broad category comparisons, a mean score for each sub-dimension of the rubric was calculated. Figure 3 shows a graphic representation of

Figure 3. Norwalk-LaMirada Lesson Analysis by Rubric Sub-Category



scores across the thirteen sub-dimensions from Time 1 and Time 2. Findings suggest that 11 of the 13 dimensions show statistically significant change from Time 1 to Time 2 (See Table 1). The most

Table 1. Dimensions of Instruction: Norwalk-LaMirada Unified SD Means Time 1 & 2

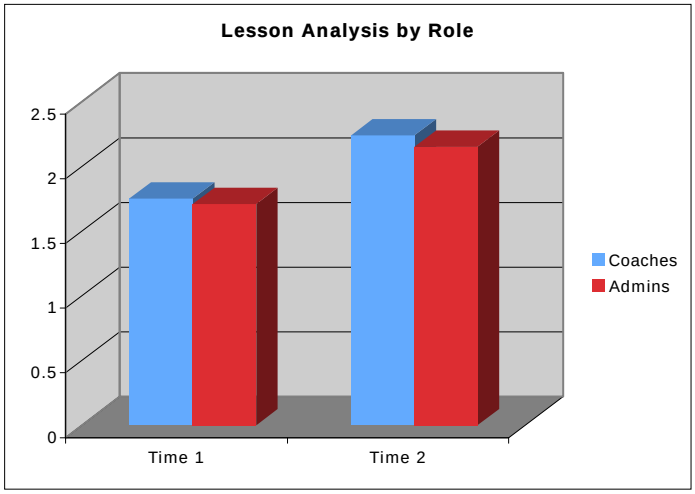
Category	Sub Category	Time 1 (Mean)	Time 2 (Mean)	Paired T-Test (2 tailed *>05; **>.01)
PURPOSE	(1) Standards	1.29	1.46	.16
	(2) Teaching Point	1.74	2.17	.0009**
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT	(3) Who's Doing the Work?	2.03	2.37	.0006**
	(4) Student Engagement Strategies	1.91	2.49	.0000032**
	(5) Student Talk	1.94	2.42	.000012**
CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGY, & ASSESSMENT	(6) Curriculum	1.37	1.54	.16
	(7) Teaching Approach/Strategy	1.66	2.14	.0013**
	(8) Scaffolds for Learning	1.94	2.43	.000469**
	(9) Teaching Decisions	1.63	2.51	.00000075**
	(10) Assessment	1.80	2.17	.00495**
CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT & CULTURE	(11) Use of Physical Space	1.74	2.06	.025*
	(12) Classroom Routines	1.51	2.09	.0000032**
	(13) Classroom Work Culture	1.71	2.31	.000001**

significant gains occurred on three sub-dimensions of the rubric. Mean scores on participants' observation and discussion of the teaching decisions made in the course of the lesson increased from 1.63 at Year 1 to 2.51 at Year 2. Similarly, participant mean scores related to observation and discussion of strategies used to engage students in the lesson increased from 1.91 in Year 1 to 2.49 in Year 2. Finally, mean scores related to participants observation and discussion of the classroom routines used to support learning increased from 1.51 in Year 1 to 2.05 in Year 2.

Comparison of Mean Scores of Norwalk-LaMirada District Administrators and Coaches

In addition, as noted earlier, the pre- and post-assessment was conducted both with administrators and district literacy coaches. The analysis suggested that both groups recorded statistically significant improvements when comparing the scores from Year 1 with those in Year 2. Moreover, the mean scores of district literacy coaches were slightly higher overall than administrators on both the pre and post assessment, and coaches also made slightly larger gains Year 1 to Year 2. Figure 4 displays a graphic representation of the comparisons across district coaches and administrators.

Figure 4. Lesson Analysis by Role

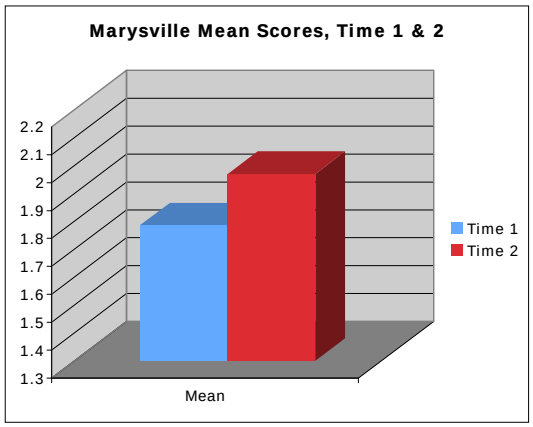


DISTRICT #2: MARYSVILLE

Comparison of Grand Means – Year 1 to Year 2

Similar to the analysis conducted with Norwalk-LaMirada data, a grand mean of all responses from Year 1 and Year 2 was calculated for participants from the Marysville district. A paired t-test revealed a statistically significant difference in the scores on the narrative responses from Year 2 as compared with Year 1 ($p<.01$). Figure 5 displays a

Figure 5. Marysville Lesson Analysis Grand Means

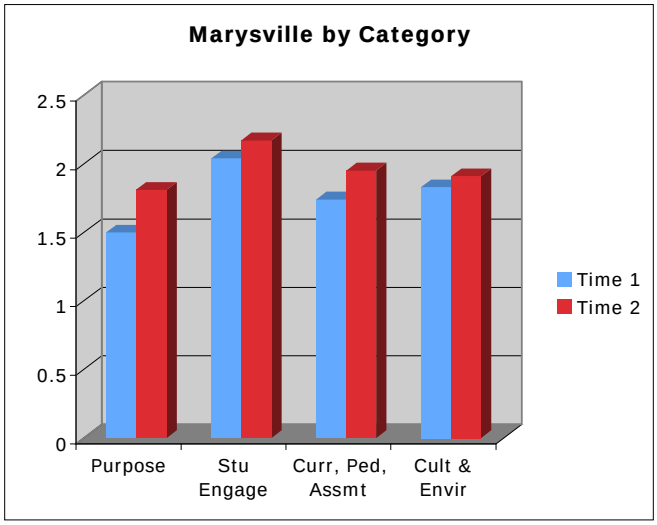


graphic representation of the change in overall mean scores. Overall mean score for participants combined improved from 1.79 on the pre-assessment (Year 1) to 1.97 on the post-assessment (Year 2).

Comparison of Means by Broad Categories

A mean score for each broad category from the rubric (Lesson Purpose, Student Engagement, Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment, and Classroom Culture and Environment) was calculated for both the pre-and post assessment. Findings suggest improvement in score means occurred in all four broad rubric categories Time 1 to Time 2. However, while changes in category means approached statistically significant levels on a two-tailed paired two sample t-test of means (*Purpose* = alpha .055; *Stud Engag* = alpha .083; *Curr, Ped & Inst* = alpha .118; *Class Cult & Env* = alpha .539) they did not reach significance at the level of alpha > .05. Figure 6 shows a graphic representation of mean scores, Year 1 and Year 2, broken out by broad category.

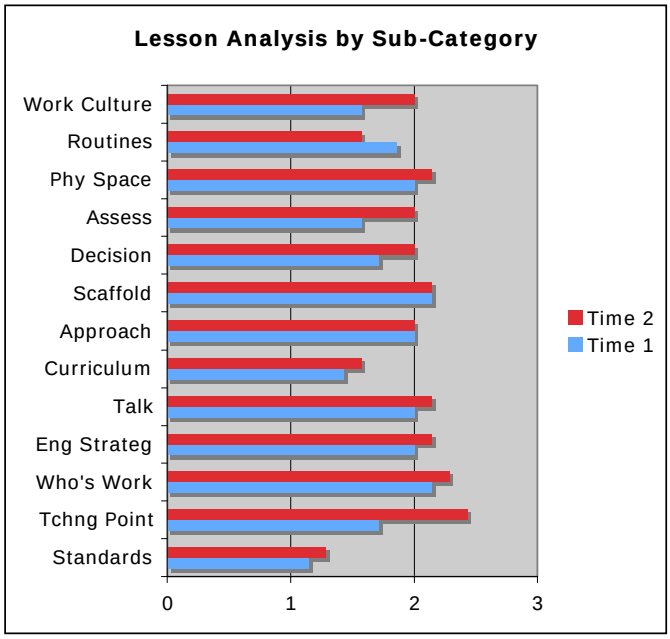
Figure 6. Marysville Lesson Analysis by Broad Rubric Category



Comparison of Means across Thirteen Sub-Dimensions

In addition to the broad category comparisons, a mean score for each sub-dimension of the rubric was calculated. Figure 7 shows a graphic representation of the mean scores from each of the thirteen sub-dimensions at Time 1 and Time 2. Findings

Figure 7. Marysville Lesson Analysis by Rubric Sub-Category



suggest that mean scores in 1 of the 13 dimensions showed statistically significant change from Time 1 to Time 2 (See Table 2).

Table 2. Dimensions of Instruction: Marysville SD Means Time 1 & 2

Category	Sub Category	Time 1 (Mean)	Time 2 (Mean)	Paired T-Test (2 tailed *>05; **>.01)
PURPOSE	(1) Standards	1.143	1.286	.3559
	(2) Teaching Point	1.714	2.429	.0082**
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT	(3) Who's Doing the Work?	2.143	2.286	.3559
	(4) Student Engagement Strategies	2.000	2.143	.3559
	(5) Student Talk	2.000	2.143	.3559
CURRICULUM, PEDAGOGY, & ASSESSMENT	(6) Curriculum	1.429	1.571	.7358
	(7) Teaching Approach/Strategy	2.000	2.000	1.0
	(8) Scaffolds for Learning	2.143	2.143	1.0
	(9) Teaching Decisions	1.714	2.000	.5222
	(10) Assessment	1.571	2.000	.1996
CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT & CULTURE	(11) Use of Physical Space	2.000	2.143	.6036
	(12) Classroom Routines	1.857	1.571	.3559
	(13) Classroom Work Culture	1.571	2.000	.0781

The statistically significant gain occurred on the "teaching point" sub-dimension of the rubric. Mean scores on participants' observation and discussion of the teaching point, or purpose of the lesson, increased from 1.714 at Year 1 to 2.429 at Year 2. While not statistically significant, a relatively larger increase in participant mean scores on sub-dimension 13 ("classroom work culture") increased from 1.571 in Year 1 to 2.0 in Year 2. Finally, mean scores of participants showed smaller increases on 8 other rubric sub-dimensions, and a slight decline on 1 sub-dimension ("classroom routines").

Due to the smaller *n* of participants from Marysville, analyses comparing scores of district administrators with district lead teacher coaches was not appropriate, and therefore not conducted.

DISCUSSION

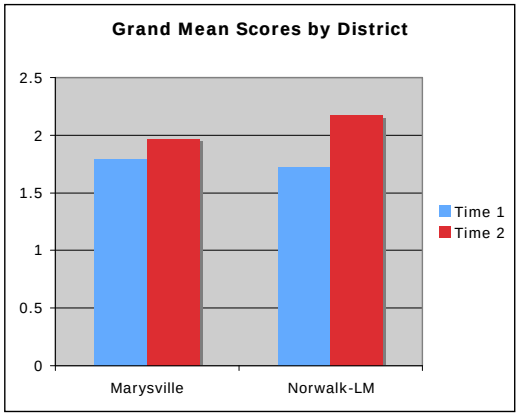
Looking across the two districts' findings presented above, it is difficult to draw hard and fast conclusions about the growth of leaders' abilities to analyze instruction and consider ways that their analysis informed comments to teachers and shaped potential decisions about professional development. Important differences in the length of the

CEL partnership intervention, and in the nature of data collection make global comparisons problematic. However, some key takeaways are apparent from the analysis. Discussion of several of these points follows, beginning with two caveats that set the stage for further discussion.

First, the Norwalk-Mirada participants constituted a much larger sample (n=36) than the Marysville group (n=8). As such, smaller differences are likely to be found to be significant in the statistical analyses of the larger-sized group, as more participants increase the variability of scores, and therefore increase the statistical power of the analysis. Said another way, small differences in means are more likely to be detected in the Norwalk data than in the Marysville data. This may help to account for the fact that most of the Norwalk mean differences were found to be statistically significant at the level of the rubric sub-dimensions, while only one of those sub-dimensions was found to be statistically significant in the Marysville data.

Second, by the time of the final round of data collection (Time 2), leaders in Norwalk-LaMirada had experienced two full years of the CEL partnership work. By comparison, Marysville's leaders had experienced only one year with the partnership work. So, comparing Time 2 means across districts is not appropriate, given the different levels of exposure to the partnership work. It is also interesting to note that the Time 2 means recorded in the Marysville data were collected at the beginning of Year 2 of the partnership work, approximately at the same time as the Time 1 data was collected in Norwalk-LaMirada. The most appropriate comparisons, at least in terms of comparing scores in relation to the length of time districts were involved with the CEL partnership work would contrast Marysville Time 2 data with Norwalk-LaMirada Time 1 data. Figure 8 shows a graphic representation of the grand means from both settings, across time.

Figure 8. Grand Mean Scores: Norwalk-LaMirada and Marysville



What is interesting to note is that the Marysville participant grand mean at Time 2 (x=1.97) is a full quarter point higher on the 4 point scale than the Time 1 grand mean from Norwalk-LaMirada (x=1.72), which may suggest that the beginning levels of instructional expertise for Marysville leaders were higher than those for Norwalk-LaMirada. Given that a similar Year 1 data snapshot for Norwalk-LaMirada is unavailable, it is difficult to say anything authoritatively on this point. However, collection of another (Time 3) round of data in Marysville would help to more adequately assess differences between the settings in this regard.

Given these caveats, however, the data analysis presented above suggests that, in general, over the year long period of study, district principals and coaches in the two districts under study improved in their ability to analyze instruction and plan comments to teachers about what they observed, based on those dimensions of instruction that were assessed by the rubric. Grand means from both groups show statistically significant gains in one year's time, and in the case of Norwalk-LaMirada, statistically significant differences extend down to the level of 11 of 13 sub-dimensions of the lesson analysis rubric. A question that emerges about the differences in the findings from the two districts is whether there is some sort of cumulative effect that was in evidence in the more substantial gains made by participants in Norwalk-LaMirada, during the second and third years of the CEL partnership, that is due to longer exposure to, and practice with, new instructional leadership knowledge and skills. A follow up data point with the Marysville group at the end of their second year in the partnership with CEL would

create one means for assessing whether that group experiences greater gains in year 2 than in year 1.

With regard to the Marysville data, even given the small *n* of participants, one of the rubric sub-dimensions—observation and discussion of the teaching point in the lesson observed—showed a relatively large result. One possible explanation for this significant change has to do with the Year 1 focus of the CEL partnership intervention. As a part of professional development conducted in the first year in Marysville, CEL coaches focused heavily on the importance of the lesson purpose, and provided multiple opportunities for Marysville leaders to observe instruction with a focus on assessing the teaching point of the lesson.

With a study of this nature, that collects limited data about leaders' skills at two "snapshots" in time, it is difficult to make causal links between any intervention in the context and the outcomes observed. Because of the complex nature of instructional improvement work, and the myriad of intervening variables that principals and coaches are likely exposed to over the course of any given year, such causal claims are not warranted. However, the gains observed in the data are consistent with the instructional and leadership coaching interventions provided by the external partner organization, the Center for Educational Leadership, aimed at improving the instructional improvement expertise of the district's leaders. The data suggest that the work done by CEL in the district is, at a minimum, contributing to the significant change in leaders' abilities. This is particularly interesting, given that different CEL coaches are working in these two separate sites, but under a common theory of action focused on improving the instructional knowledge and skills of district leaders.

The data clearly suggest that, overall, this group of leaders from two districts, as a collective, has made significant knowledge and skill gains in these aspects of instructional leadership knowledge and skill. Nonetheless, the data also point out that, as a collective, these leaders have additional room for growth in their expertise with analyzing instruction and planning feedback to teachers. Findings also suggest the district efforts to date are leading to improvements, and additional research is warranted to determine whether these gains continue, and how the new knowledge and skills that leaders possess manifest in the real-life work they do with teachers in the district.

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APPENDIX A: INSTRUCTIONAL RUBRIC

This document has been temporarily removed because the rubric is currently being used to develop additional CEL products and services. Please email Dina Blum (dinablum@u.washington.edu) for more information or click here.

APPENDIX B

Partnership Prospectus

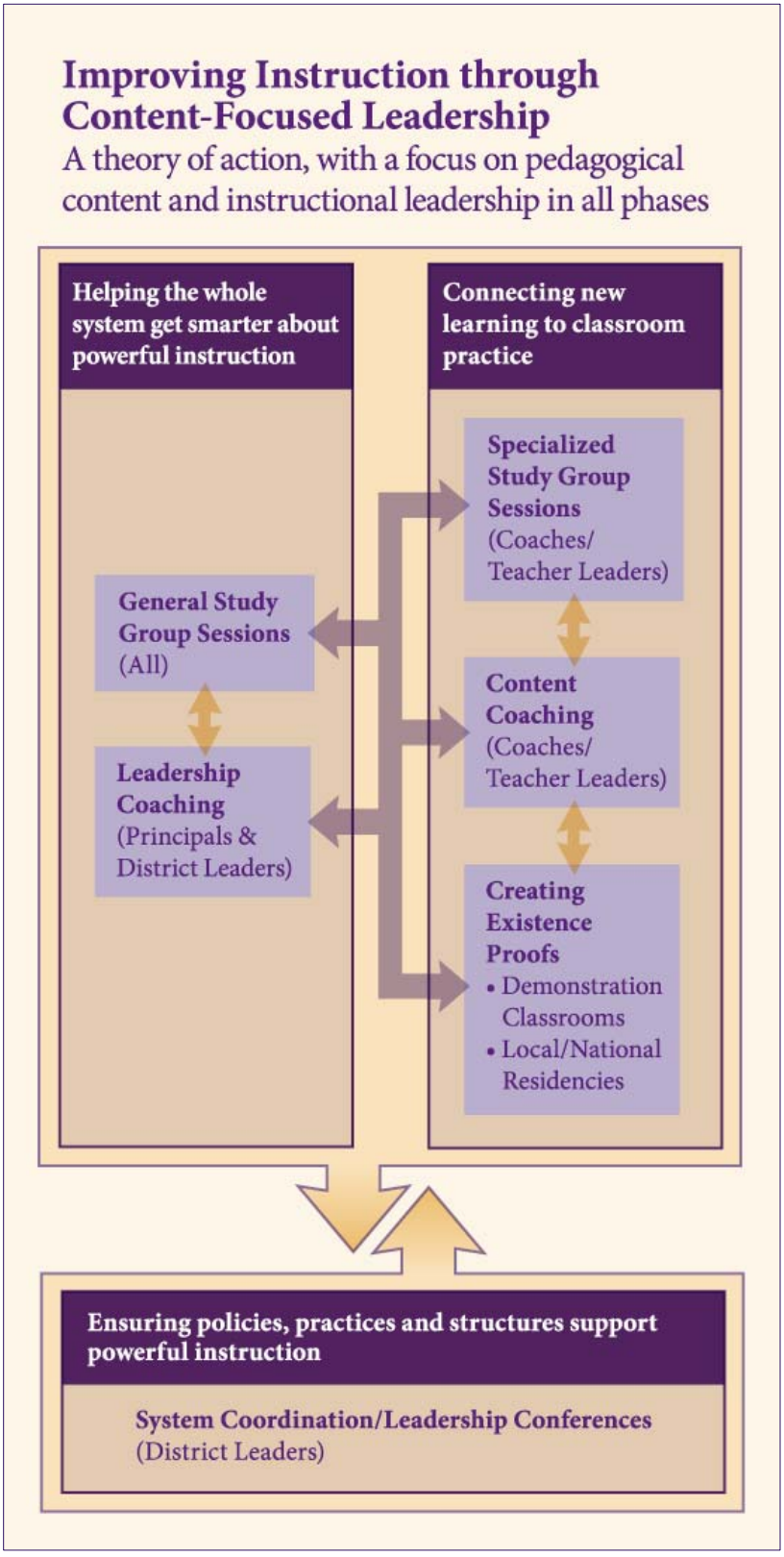
Center for Educational Leadership (CEL) - University of Washington

LEADERSHIP AS LEARNING:
Closing the achievement gap by improving instruction through
content-focused leadership

The Center for Educational Leadership (CEL) exists to eliminate the achievement gap that divides students along the lines of race, class, and language. CEL believes that the achievement gap will be eliminated only when the quality of instruction improves, and that instruction will only improve at scale when leaders better understand what powerful instruction looks like in order to lead and guide professional development, target and align resources, engage in on-going problem solving and long-range capacity building.

This prospectus outlines a professional development partnership between a school district and CEL. Partnerships are based on the belief that powerful instructional leadership is the nexus for improving student achievement.

THEORY OF ACTION



Though each partnership is tailored to the particular context of the district(s) involved, the overall theory of action guiding the work has three basic footings:

1) The first footing is about ***helping the system to get smarter about powerful instruction*** and the leadership necessary to guide that instruction.

2) The second footing involves working directly with content coaches and teacher leaders at school sites with the aim of ***connecting new learning to classroom practice***.

3) The third footing is about ***ensuring the necessary policies, practices and structures are in place to support powerful instruction*** by working directly with district level leaders to examine their own district contexts.

Whether in literacy or math, sustained, in-depth examination in

one content area grounds leadership practice squarely within the work of instructional improvement; this ensures that the three footings of CEL's theory of action are closely aligned. The ultimate goal is for each district to seize upon its growing capacity to further develop and sustain its own learning.

The focus on leadership for instructional improvement has two distinct, but mutually reinforcing dimensions: (1) defining the instructional practices, structures, and routines that are conducive to powerful student learning and to the adult professional development that supports it; (2) honing the leadership practices and routines which support, nurture, and push the development of such practices across the district.

With these two dimensions in mind—"instructional practices" and "instructional leadership"—the Center for Educational Leadership provides the following:

HELPING THE SYSTEM GET SMARTER ABOUT POWERFUL INSTRUCTION

General Study Group Sessions for School and District Leaders

The *General Study Group Sessions* serve as a central component of the professional development partnership. The purpose of these sessions is two-fold: (1) to study high-quality instruction in a specific content area (literacy or mathematics) and (2) to define and refine the communication and instructional leadership strategies conducive to improving student achievement through high-quality instruction.

Participation in *General Study Group Sessions* is an expectation for all K-12 principals, assistant principals, literacy coaches, key teacher leaders, and central office leaders. The configuration of each study group depends on the size and needs of the particular district(s) involved. All *General Study Groups* are initially designed for district-wide participation. Over time, however, the configuration of the *General Study Groups* may change to meet the evolving needs of a district. Some districts, for example, have organized *General Study Groups* around particular grade-level bands (i.e. elementary and secondary).

General Study Groups meet for a series of one day sessions across the school year and are conducted by leaders in the field of literacy/mathematics instruction and instructional leadership. The goal of *General Study Group Sessions* is to support school and district leaders, instructional coaches and/or teacher leaders in their own learning of quality instruction and instructional leadership. Specifically, these sessions are aimed at helping participants:

- Recognize, articulate, and teach the critical attributes of powerful instruction
- Build pedagogical content knowledge
- Hone skills for curricular planning informed by knowledge of standards, curricular resources, pedagogical content, and ongoing assessment of student needs
- Develop shared language for talking about teaching and learning

- Develop specific leadership skills that can assist in the movement towards more powerful and effective instruction
- Cultivate an interdependent professional community for teachers and leaders
- Become more effective at planning, coaching, and collaborating with teachers in developing powerful instruction

The format of each session generally includes presentations of exemplary instructional practices; demonstrations of strategies with adult and student groups; time for individual/team/school planning with support of CEL coaches; sharing of professional development tools, resources, and texts to support the work.

While each *General Study Group Session* is built upon the needs of the district(s) and the work of the previous sessions, the scope of the *General Study Group Sessions*—regardless of content area focus—includes specific knowledge and skills which serve as the foundation for *Leadership* and *Instructional Coaching*. These include:

<u>Instructional Practice</u>

Learning Environment/Conditions for Learning
How People Learn/Developing Pedagogical Content Knowledge
Teaching in the Zone of Proximal Development
    Supporting Students Towards Increasing Independence
    The Role of Modeling
    Meeting the Needs of English Language Learners
Data Based Inquiry
Assessment Driven Instruction
Using Standards to Inform Curricular Planning and Instruction
The Crucial Role of Talk in Learning

<u>Instructional Leadership</u>

Communication
    Developing a "Teachable Point of View"
    Setting Clear Expectations
    Framing the Work—articulating rationale for priorities, creating a sense of urgency, writing instructional letters, crafting openings and closings for meetings
Data Based Inquiry
    Using School Based Data to Determine Student and Teacher Needs
    Using Data as a Leverage Point
Planning for Professional Development to Support Teachers' Growth
    Identifying Teachers' Learning Styles and Needs
    Crafting Feedback for Teachers
    Developing the systems and structures to nurture and support professional learning
Identifying and Working with Teacher Leaders

Leadership Coaching

To apply the learning from *General Study Group Sessions* to leadership actions at the district or school level, *Leadership Coaching* is a key component of the professional development partnership. All principals and their district office supervisors receive coaching from accomplished instructional leaders. The exact number of *Leadership Coaching* days is negotiated as part of the overall partnership contract, but a minimum of four days per person is recommended. The configuration of the leadership coaching is also negotiated as part of the contract. In some districts, principals receive coaching in dyads or triads. In other districts, coaching is one-on-one. In all cases, leadership coaching is school and district embedded, carried out in the actual context of leaders' work.

Facilitated instructional walkthroughs are one element of leadership coaching. Leaders utilize information from walkthroughs to deepen pedagogical content knowledge, analyze classroom instruction, ascertain the strengths and needs of teachers, support teacher growth, and plan professional development opportunities for individual, small groups, and whole staff learning.

CONNECTING NEW LEARNING TO CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Specialized Study Group Sessions for Coaches and Teacher Leaders

Approximately one day per month (commonly following the General Study Group Session) serves as an opportunity for additional study focused on the work of content coaches and/or teacher leaders. These sessions are intended to deepen their understanding of the content introduced at the General Study Group Sessions and to prepare them to work with colleagues at their own sites.

Specialized Study Group Sessions are designed to address an additional body of knowledge specific to the work of content coaching and professional development planning. Coaches and teacher leaders learn how to organize, develop, and sustain study groups in their respective schools and districts; how to structure coaching work with teachers; how to grow and utilize lab-site classrooms within and across schools; how to work with principals to plan for, stage, and deliver professional development; how to utilize video tapes and other resources for their own and others' learning and professional growth.

Instructional Coaching

Instructional Coaching or *Content Coaching* is an essential vehicle for connecting the learning from Study Group Sessions to classroom practice. The specific number of and configuration of coaching days is negotiated as part of the overall partnership contract; CEL Project Directors work with district leadership to make decisions about how to invest coaching resources to achieve the greatest impact.

CEL coaches spend approximately 1-4 days a month "on the ground" in schools with school and district teacher leaders. These coaching days extend the work of both the

General and *Specialized Study Group Sessions* by providing teacher leaders with additional opportunities to "try on" new teaching strategies and to work with teachers in their classrooms—all with the support of an outside coach who models in classrooms, debriefs with teachers, co-teaches, co-plans, observes and provides feedback. *Instructional Coaching* may focus on developing pedagogical knowledge in a particular content area (literacy or math) or in the area of coaching and professional development itself.

Creating Existence Proofs

Whether through observing a coach model a lesson in a classroom, visiting schools with demonstrated success, or participating in professional development residencies in the classrooms of exemplary teachers, people need to see images of what is possible in order to develop a sense of urgency and deepen their commitment to the challenge of improving student achievement everyday, in all classrooms. When teachers see their own students—or students like them—engaged in rigorous, standard-bearing work, it elevates the expectations for what is possible.

To this end, CEL works with each partnership to design a plan for cultivating expertise among teachers, and creating existence proofs within each district. Some districts, for example, develop lab-site classrooms as places where teachers and coaches can "try on" new instructional strategies with support.

While districts are growing the necessary expertise within their systems, the Center for Educational Leadership connects them with a network of schools and districts across the country engaged in similar work. CEL orchestrates a variety of opportunities to learn from the experience of others through visitations to and residencies in exemplary schools and classrooms.

ENSURING THE NECESSARY POLICIES, PRACTICES AND STRUCTURES ARE IN PLACE TO SUPPORT POWERFUL INSTRUCTION

Leadership Conferences

The purpose of the *Leadership Conferences* is to provide an on-going venue for the application of the principles and practices learned with the *General Study Group* and *Leadership Coaching*. Regular meetings are scheduled over the school year with key central office leaders and principal representatives. These meetings are planned in consultation with the Project Director(s) from the Center for Educational Leadership. The extent to which the *Leadership Conferences* are facilitated by CEL representatives depends on the nature of the partnership; districts take on increasing responsibility for planning and leading the *Leadership Conferences* over time.

The aim of the *Leadership Conferences* is to (1) further flesh out and develop the school district's professional development plan; (2) coordinate this effort between and among schools; (3) identify the systems level policies, practices and structures that need changing in order to improve instruction. The content of *Leadership Conferences*

addresses how the district might develop its own "green house" for cultivating expertise among teachers, how to identify and utilize current teacher leadership that exemplifies high-quality instruction, and ongoing examination of their own instructional leadership skills.

Project Management

Each partnership is unique and the professional development needs of a district continually evolve with new learning. For this reason, each district partnership is managed by at least one Project Director from the Center for Educational Leadership. Initially, this person is instrumental in working with district leaders to develop the partnership contract, and to conceptualize how the various components will manifest and reinforce the three footings outlined above. The Project Director is the main interface between the district and CEL coaches and representatives.

As district leaders develop their own capacity, they become more adept at refining long-term goals and problem solving along the way. Over time, project management involves monitoring, reflecting on, negotiating and reconceptualizing the partnership work in response to identified goals. For example, the Project Director may work with district leaders to develop other learning opportunities such as specialized residencies in CEL's partnership schools, professional development attached to summer school for students, and intervisitations among partnership districts.

There is significant flexibility regarding how the various components of the partnership play out over time, provided that the basic footings of the theory of action are not compromised. While the Center for Educational Leadership remains open to the number of actual content and coaching days, as well as the specific content to be addressed, the partnership is contingent upon a district commitment to invest in learning opportunities and structures to help the system get smarter about instruction, connect new learning to the classroom, and ensure the necessary policies, practices and structures are in place to support powerful instruction.

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