

# CLASSROOM-FOCUSED IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

## STEP 1 (THE ORIENTATION STEP):

### *DESCRIBE THE ASSESSMENTS UNDER CONSIDERATION AND DEFINE THE TERMS USED IN THE DATA REPORTS.*

Step 1 of the Classroom-Focused Improvement Process builds the assessment literacy of the team by focusing team members on the assessment data to be analyzed and by making sure that team members understand the nature and characteristics of the assessment.

Before jumping into the analysis, it is essential to take time *as a team* to understand the nature of the assessment being discussed, who participated in it and who did not, and the terminology and statistics used in the report. This step is particularly important if data reports originate outside the school, such as from the state or from the district's information management system or data warehouse.

This step is also intended to ensure that there is a commonly-shared understanding of assessment terms and concepts among team members, as opposed to individual understandings, which may vary widely or be incorrect.

The data team can develop its members' assessment literacy by considering questions such as these:

- *What essential skills and knowledge are we analyzing?*
- *What do the terms in the data reports mean?*
- *Is there anything we need to know about how the assessment was administered before we analyze the data?*

While it may seem that these questions are simplistic and obvious, it is important for the team to have complete answers to them before proceeding to the subsequent steps of the CFIP protocol.

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## STEP 2 (THE QUESTION STEP):

### *IDENTIFY THE QUESTIONS TO ANSWER IN THE DIALOGUE.*

Every data analysis session should be designed to answer one or more essential questions. This will avoid the tedious and time-wasting exercise of trolling through spreadsheets and databases without any direction. It is best to post the questions identified for discussion to keep everyone on track.

It is likely that the questions addressed by teams using CFIP will change as the year progresses. Here are some examples of overarching questions that teacher teams could address at different points during the year:

#### At the beginning of the school year

- *What essential knowledge and skills do our students already have as we begin our new school year or unit?*
- *What is the variation in students' knowledge and skills within each of our classes or course sections?*

#### During the school year

- *How well did our students perform in the recent benchmark assessment?*
- *What instructional changes will we need to make now to increase student achievement on the MSA/HSA/PARCC assessment scheduled in six (three) months?*
- *What are the strengths and weaknesses of our students as shown by a variety of assessments?*
- *What can we learn about our students to help us in our instructional planning?*
- *What do we know now about the strengths and weaknesses of our students that we did not know the last time we analyzed data?*

#### Near the end of the school year

- *What students' strengths and weaknesses of this year's students can we pass on to next year's teachers to help them get off to a good start?*

# CLASSROOM-FOCUSED IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

## STEP 3 (THE PATTERNS STEP):

### *IDENTIFY THE MAJOR PATTERNS OF STUDENTS' STRENGTHS AND NEEDS AT THE CLASS LEVEL.*

At this step of the CFIP protocol, team members describe what they see over and over again in the data at the whole class level. Patterns of the major class-wide strengths and needs should first be discerned within one data source and then, if possible, by triangulating (bringing together) data from multiple sources. This prioritization is important so team members can focus their re-teaching or differentiated instruction in response to the data. The goal at this step is a limited and actionable list of strengths and needs.

The team should be very specific and concrete in identifying patterns of strengths and weaknesses, first for the grade as whole, and then for each class in the grade. In the Maryland College and Career Readiness Frameworks, this means analyzing data at the level of the essential skills and knowledge that have been designated for the grade.

Major strengths should be identified first, so they can be built on in later lessons. If the assessment includes multiple objectives and many strengths or needs surface, the team will need to prioritize and note only two or three of the objectives that are most essential for future student learning.

These questions could be used:

- *What essential skills and knowledge are the most important overall class strengths (from more than one data source, if possible)?*
- *What essential skills and knowledge are the most important overall class needs (from more than one data source, if possible)?*

# CLASSROOM-FOCUSED IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

## STEP 4 (THE ACTION STEP):

***IDENTIFY THE INSTRUCTIONAL FACTORS THAT MIGHT HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE PATTERNS OF STUDENT WEAKNESSES.***

***DETERMINE THE STEPS TO BE TAKEN TO ADDRESS THE PATTERNS OF NEED AND WHEN AND HOW RE-ASSESSMENT WILL OCCUR.***

*First, reflect on the reasons why the weaknesses occurred.*

At this step of CFIP, team members reflect on their instruction on the skills and knowledge covered in the assessments under consideration. The CFIP Reflection Guide can help teams to structure this interaction. The goal is to identify a few critical instructional factors that might have contributed to the observed patterns of student performance. Knowing this is critical to determining the team's response.

This question could be used:

- *What instructional factors might have contributed to the patterns of student performance on these assessments?*

*Then, decide on and implement the next steps.*

In response to the classwide weaknesses, the team could decide to:

- Reteach the skill or content knowledge to the entire class using a different strategy before moving forward to new content, OR
- Move forward in the curriculum with new content, and integrate additional instruction in the weak skill or knowledge on a regular basis as an important part of the new work, OR
- Move forward in the curriculum with new content, and allow students to practice -- with no additional instruction -- the weak skill or knowledge through drills, warm-ups, "must dos," sponge time, etc., OR
- Move forward in the curriculum with new content and no further work on the weak skill or knowledge, knowing that students will be exposed to it at a later date when it will occur again in the curriculum, OR
- Divide the class into groups and provide enrichment opportunities to proficient students and re-teaching or additional practice in the weak skills to the non-proficient students

Criteria to be considered in making these decisions include:

- Is student proficiency in the weak skill or knowledge essential at this time for all students in order for them to be successful with other content over the next few weeks or months?
- Is the weakness widespread among many students?
- Is there more than one data source indicating the weaknesses? (This is to guard against over-reacting to student performance on one or two items on a single standardized test.)

Questions such as the following may be used:

- *What steps will we take to address the patterns of class needs?*
- *How and when will we re-assess to determine progress?*

Teams should strive to identify the most powerful, high-leverage instructional strategy that all members will commit to implementing in the agreed-upon time frame. Combining the expertise of all team members in developing the intervention that all teachers will use will lead to greater success in its implementation. In this way, the CFIP dialogue contributes to increasing teachers' repertoire of effective instructional strategies.

After the re-teaching has occurred, teachers should reassess students and be prepared to report back on its success at a future CFIP meeting.

If re-teaching is to occur and there is time still remaining in the CFIP session, teams should continue their dialogue with Step 6, and then return to Step 5 at a later meeting after re-teaching.

# CLASSROOM-FOCUSED IMPROVEMENT PROCESS REFLECTION GUIDE

## USE TO GUIDE RE-TEACHING (Step 4) AND TO IDENTIFY FUTURE INSTRUCTIONAL CHANGES (Step 6)<sup>1</sup>

*(This is not intended as a checklist of characteristics that should be included in all lessons. Rather, it should be used as a reflection tool to identify possible new ways to re-teach content and upgrades to be made in future instruction.)*

### AS WE PLANNED INSTRUCTION, HOW WELL DID WE:

- Consult the curriculum or pacing guides for the skills and knowledge to be taught and the most appropriate sequence to use?
- Understand and plan for the prerequisite skills and knowledge required by students to be proficient?
- Understand and plan for the level of cognitive demand (rigor) required that students must demonstrate to show proficiency?
- Assemble needed resources for the unit which reflect students' backgrounds, learning styles, and cultural perspectives?
- Administer a pre-assessment and use the results to help determine class and individual student needs?
- Anticipate common student misconceptions, based on the pre-assessment and previous work with students?
- Plan for culturally responsive instruction that reflects students' backgrounds, abilities, learning styles, and preferences?
- Plan for appropriate differentiation in content, process (instructional strategies), and product (ways that students will show what they know and can do)?
- (Add additional instructional strategies that are important for planning in your grade, school, or subject area)

### AT THE BEGINNING OF INSTRUCTION, HOW WELL DID WE:

- Share the learning expectations with students in terms that they understand?
- Involve students in setting their own learning goals for the unit and tracking their progress?
- Share with students before instruction the rubric that specifies in detail how students will show what they know and can do?
- (Add additional instructional strategies important at the beginning of instruction in your grade, school, or subject area)

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<sup>1</sup> Based on the work of Marzano, R. J. (2003). *What works in schools: Translating research into action*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development; Stiggins, R. J. et al. (2007). *Classroom assessment for student learning: Doing it right, Using it well*. 2<sup>nd</sup>. Edition. Portland, OR: Assessment Training Institute; expectations of the Common Core State Standards; and feedback from school leaders, including Michael Caldwell of the Howard County (Maryland) Public School System.

## **DURING INSTRUCTION, HOW WELL DID WE:**

- Make connections to prior learning or related content to engage students and promote synthesis of information?
- Model the concept or skill and provide students exemplars to work toward?
- Correct misconceptions that students may have to start or that may occur during instruction?
- Check for student understanding frequently and modify instruction based on the formative data obtained?
- Base assignments on real-world tasks?
- Offer alternative pathways to success, including the choice of content (where appropriate) and varied levels of support and challenge?
- Vary instructional activities frequently throughout the lesson to meet individual student needs?
- Use graphic organizers and other nonlinguistic representations to show content in symbolic form?
- Use cooperative learning activities and other strategies to engage students throughout the lesson?
- Provide multiple opportunities for student writing and speaking grounded in evidence?
- Engage students in the close reading and the careful analysis of varied, complex, and content-rich informational texts?
- Assign purposeful homework and vary the approaches to providing feedback on the homework?
- Provide students specific, timely, and varied feedback on their assignments?
- Ask students to respond to higher-level questions in which they must analyze, synthesize, and evaluate?
- Provide multiple opportunities for students to practice, review, and apply their new skills and knowledge?
- Involve students in monitoring their own progress toward learning goals?
- Reinforce student effort and provide recognition of student success?
- Acknowledge and praise appropriate behavior and respond to inappropriate behavior?
- (Add additional instructional strategies important during instruction in your grade, school, or subject area)

## **AT THE END OF EACH PART OF INSTRUCTION, HOW WELL DID WE:**

- Use the rubric to score and provide timely and specific feedback to students?
- Use a variety of assessment types and formats, including those that mirror current (MSA/HSA) and future (PARCC) assessments in content, format, and rigor?
- Score classroom assessments with the same level of rigor used in scoring current and planned state and national assessments?
- Involve students in helping to identify the next steps in their learning?
- (Add additional instructional strategies important at the end of instruction in your grade, school, or subject area)

# CLASSROOM-FOCUSED IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

## STEP 5 (THE DIFFERENTIATION STEP):

***NAME THE STUDENTS WHO EXCELLED AND THOSE WHO STILL NEED ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE.  
IDENTIFY, IMPLEMENT, AND EVALUATE IN-CLASS ENRICHMENTS AND INTERVENTIONS.***

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** This step of the CFIP protocol will occur in a later team meeting, after teachers have had the opportunity to implement the actions they identified in Step 4.

At this step, team members dig deeper into the data to focus on the progress of individual students after re-teaching and to decide the response of the team. Students at both ends of the achievement distribution -- those ready for enrichment and those requiring individualized interventions -- should be considered.

Team members should begin this step by analyzing individual student results to name the students who are learning the targeted skills and knowledge at a high level. This dialogue should become the basis for discussions about regrouping within or across classes so that enrichments can be put in place that will continue to challenge these students.

Team members should continue their analysis of individual student-level data by naming those students who are not being successful in acquiring the targeted knowledge and skills despite re-teaching.

Areas of weakness should lead to the exploration by the team of in-class interventions to put in place. Possibilities for short-term, skill-based re-grouping within or across classes should be considered.

Questions such as the following should be used:

- *Who is ready for more independent work, and how will we provide this enrichment?*
- *Who still needs additional assistance to attain proficiency, and how will we provide these interventions?*



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## **STEP 6 (THE FUTURE STEP): *IDENTIFY, IMPLEMENT, AND EVALUATE ONE OR TWO IMPROVEMENTS IN FUTURE INSTRUCTION. PLAN FOR THE NEXT DATA ANALYSIS SESSION.***

Step 6 of the Classroom-Focused Improvement Process is unique in that it is forward looking. Here, the team is not acting in response to data that had already been collected.

At this step, team members should look ahead in the curriculum at the new content to be introduced in two or three weeks and identify an essential skill or concept that past data and their experience indicate will be difficult for students.

Team members should combine their expertise and plan in detail the most effective instructional strategy possible. As all team members collaborate, the quality of instruction is enhanced. All teachers should commit to using the strategy and to reporting back on its success at a future CFIP meeting.

This is an essential step, for unless team members modify their instructional practice in the future, in response to the results of their data analysis, student learning will not improve.

Finally, at this step, team members decide when the data will be reviewed again to determine the success of the enrichments, interventions, and instructional changes and to track student progress on future assessments. This is also the time to raise questions that the data did not answer and to discuss how these questions will be pursued by team members.

Questions similar to the following might be used at this final step:

- *Based on reflection on our past instruction and the current levels of student performance, as shown by the data, how will we improve future instruction to increase the learning of all students?*
- *When will we review the data again to determine the success of the enrichments, interventions, and instructional changes?*
- *What do the data not tell us? What questions remain about student achievement that we need to answer? How will we attempt to answer these questions?*