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Professional Learning Communities: Perfect Pamphlet

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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES:

PERFECT PAMPHLET

A Project Report

Presented to

The Graduate Faculty

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirement for the Degree

Master of Education

Master Teacher

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by

Kathleen (KC) Heywood

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ABSTRACT

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES:

THE PERFECT PAMPHLET

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The intent of this study is to demonstrate how teacher collaboration can improve student learning. Research supports the relationship between teacher collaboration and academic success for students (DuFour & DuFour, 2004). Studies also show that a correlation between high achieving students is a direct result of teachers collaborating and having common goals for learning improvement (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Therefore, collaboration among intermediate school teachers was studied (DuFour & DuFour, 2004). As a result of extensive research regarding teacher collaboration and student success at the intermediate school level, the Perfect Pamphlet was developed. All learning targets in the Perfect Pamphlet are aligned with Washington State Standards in all intermediate school subjects. This Perfect Pamphlet can be used as a reference for all teachers, parents and students interested in improving student learning.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background of the project

Professional Learning Communities are not new to education; in fact, the work of

Alexander Meiklejohn (1932) and John Dewey (1933) in the 1920s and 1930s gave rise

to the concept of a student learning community.

Increasing specialization and fragmentation in higher education caused Meiklejohn

(1932) to call for a community of study and a unity and coherence of curriculum across

disciplines. Dewey (1933) advocated learning that was active; student centered, and

involved shared inquiry. A combination of these approaches in the late 1970s and 1980s

produced a pedagogy and structure that has led, among other things, to students'

increased grade point averages, retention, and intellectual development (University of

Miami, 2007, para.1).

"Quality teaching requires strong professional learning communities. Collegial

interchange, not isolation, must become the norm for teachers. Communities of learning

can no longer be considered utopian; they must become the buildings that establish a new

foundation for America's schools" (National Commission on Teaching, 2003, p.17).

Today's teachers are asked to educate children to a higher level than was expected by

the pioneers of education. Students' are expected to achieve academic excellence by

passing a yearly test, starting at age seven, in the state of Washington. How did the

education system get here? More importantly, it is here and it is time to find the best way

to make sure all children learn. New policies, especially those associated with the No

Child Left Behind Act (2001), provide for restructuring schools-such as "reconstituting" a school's teachers when test scores fail to show adequate yearly progress. In addition, restructuring schools often occurs in response to a change in a district's boundaries, teacher retirements, and economic change within a school district. What happens to teachers' teams when schools are restructing is an important issue because changes could disrupt team functions important to student learning. Yet little research has shed light on what happens to teachers' teams when school structure changes (National Middle School Association, 2006).

A paradigm shift is needed, both in the public and in teachers themselves about what the roll of the teacher entails (Hammond, 1996). Many in the public and in the profession believe that the only legitmate use of teacher's time is standing in front of the class and dictating a lesson. Darling-Hammond (1996) found that teachers in Japan teach fewer classes, using a greater portion of their time planning and conferring with colleagues, working with students individually, visiting other classrooms, and engaging in other professional development activities.

<div style="text-align:center">Statement of the Problem</div>

Historically middle schools have never really fit into the educational model; elementary schools can be traced back to the 18th century and high schools to the 19th century. In the 1970s, junior highs, grades 7-9, were organized in an attempt to educate young adolescents. In 1982, The National Middle School Association attempted to put forth criteria for teaching middle school students, grades 6-8, or 5-7. In 1989 the publication *Turning Points: Preparing American Youth for the 21st Century* by Carnegie

Foundations' council on Adolescent Development was published. *Turning Points* found that middle schools needed small communities for learning with a core academic program to ensure success for all students. Also mentioned in *Turning Points,* a school will need to empower teachers and admistrators to make decisions about middle school students, and have experienced teachers' teaching this age of student. Offering health and fitness classes to every student and finding ways to connect students with their families and with the community will benefit middle school students. These are the foundations to developing professional learning communities (Dufour & DuFour, 2004).

Teachers at Jackson Intermediate School in Ashwood School District felt disconnected from fellow teachers. They were teaching in isolation and unable to have time to collaborate with other teachers in the same grade level or subject area. Although every teacher had a one hour prep period daily, they would not prep with teachers teaching the same grade level or subject area. The schedule dictated the teachers' prep time and did not allow for on-going collaboration. The only time teachers spent time collaborating was when they were at a training, and this was not the appropriate place to collaborate. Teachers were starved to talk to each other about what and how they were teaching. Yes, Jackson did have an adopted curriculum in all subject areas, but the implementation looked drastically different from classroom to classroom. Teachers who chose to stay after school and work at school during the weekends did make time for collaboration, but this did not include every teacher and there was not any time during the regular school day for a formal sit down with an agenda to collaborate. Every teacher agreed it was important for student learning to have teacher collaboration.

Students themselves would compare activities between teachers by asking, "Why do some students get activities and others do not." It wasn't that some teachers were withholding activities from students; it was they were unaware of what their fellow teachers were doing. The teachers felt bad that they were not talking to fellow teachers to make sure all students benefited from great lessons and activities. The problem was teachers were not consistent in how the curriculum was taught and there was no specific or on-going time to collaborate with one another. The principal was also confronted with this problem over and over again from parents. He realized that his teachers had to have a way to get together and collaborate if Jackson Intermediate School was to offer learning for all students. At this point, teachers and administrators started talking about the Perfect Pamphlet, a resource guide for teachers, administrators, parents and students.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project was to develop the Perfect Pamphlet which was a direct result of creating Professional Learning Communities, (PLCs) at Jackson Intermediate School. To accomplish this purpose two goals were addressed. The first goal to be accomplished was to make a schedule that was geared towards teachers' prepping together with the same subject and grade levels. This was no easy task, with 620 students, 38 teachers, and trying to accommodate for music, band and P.E. classes. The staff at Jackson was very flexible and had to be creative in order for this to happen. The second goal of this project was to create the Perfect Pamphlet with learning targets for grade levels, 5, 6 and 7 that were aligned with the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs). The Perfect Pamphlet does not contain all the EALRs, only the

most essential targets that students would learn. Each subject area had 10 to 15 targets. These targets would be evaluated by the teachers.

Significance of the Project

The significance of this project was to improve student learning by developing PLCs at Jackson Intermediate School in Ashwood School district. "Patience and perseverance have a magical affect before which difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish," stated John Quincy Adams (DuFour & DuFour, 2004, p. 34).

When teachers at Jackson decided to commit to improving student learning by creating PLCs, what was created was a place where teachers were able to collaborate daily with co-workers and establish clear and consistent learning targets for students. Even though teachers taught differently, they were able to share expertise and learn how to be more effective with-in their own classrooms. The Perfect Pamphlet was also created that laid out in great detail what students would learn by years end. This Perfect Pamphlet was also given to parents. Normal developmental issues were also put into the Perfect Pamphlet for parents that were struggling with raising intermediate school age students. Jackson's behavior matrix for school-wide expectations in common areas was included in the Perfect Pamphlet so parents could use common language at home when referring to school behavior expectations.

Limitations of the project

The success of PLCs and the Perfect Pamphlet will depend on the leader of the school and the team that will help to implement and offer support to teachers and staff (DuFour,

DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004). If teachers are unable to commit and are not willing to collaborate this could severely impact the process. The time factor involved in participating in PLCs could also be a limitation to the success of PLCs. Teachers who decide to continue to teach in isolation could also be a serious limitation to the process of PLCs. And, of course, money will always be a factor when implementing a new program in any school. Professional development will need to be offered to teachers before, during and after implementation of PLCs. If Ashwood School District does not support PLCs at Jackson Intermediate School, then funds will need to be found in the school building budget, which is often already stretched to its limits early in the school year. The most critical piece in the implementation of PLCs will be the teachers and their willingness and ability to work together towards a common goal-improved student learning.

<div align="center">Definition of Terms</div>

Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs): The state of Washington's articulated expectations for student learning (Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction).

Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs): Teachers getting together and discussing a common goal that improves student learning (University of Miami, 2007).

Learning Targets: What students will learn aligned with Washington State Standards (DuFour & DuFour 2004).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB): Public Law 107-110.

Professional Learning Communities: Teachers collaborating together in order to achieve a common goal (DuFour & DuFour, 2004).

Project Overview

Chapter one gives a background of this project and the significance of creating Professional Learning Communities at Jackson Intermediate School in Ashwood School District. A historical account is included, stating the need for learning communities in a middle school.

Chapter two includes a literature review which shows the correlation of PLCs to improved student achievement. The cultural change in schools is discussed and debated. The single most important step a school will take on the journey to becoming a PLC will be the adoption of learning as the central purpose of a school instead of teaching (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004).

Chapter three contains the background of implementing PLCs at Jackson Intermediate School; the process that was involved in this implementation; and what procedure was used for a successful implementation of PLCs. How PLCs developed over time is also included in this chapter.

Chapter four includes the process of making the Perfect Pamphlet that will complement the PLCs efforts at Jackson Intermediate School. It goes through the process and research that was involved in making the Perfect Pamphlet and how it evolved as issues came up from the implementation of PLCs.

Chapter five discusses the success Jackson Intermediate School had as a result of implementing the PLCs. A summary of the author's view of the implementation of

PLCs, what problems developed during the implementation of PLCs, and how the Perfect

Pamphlet was received by the teachers, parents and students is also included. An account

of how issues and problems were discussed and rectified in collaborating teams is an

important part of this chapter. What worked and did not work is included. A personal

account from a teacher's point of view of the implementation of this project at Jackson

Intermediate School in Ashwood School District is also included. Recommendations for

further research of PLCs are discussed in this final chapter.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Background

The "Achievement Gap" is a national crisis. Kagan (2007) offers a solution to close the gap and truly leave no child behind. "To support our democratic philosophy our educational system is based on the notion of equality. Regardless of your race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or language background, schooling in a democracy is to provide everyone an equal opportunity of excelling academically and excelling in our open society. That's the American Dream-but it's not the American reality" (Kagan, 2007, p.2). Since the inception of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), the pressure on schools to have every child achieve has been the main focus in education in the 21st Century (Kagan, 2007).

"Early research on cooperative learning showed that cooperative learning was a promising intervention for closing the achievement gap" (Kagan, 1994, p. 2). "Both minority and majority students' achievement levels were greater with cooperative learning than with traditional teaching methods. Most impressive was the fact that minority students gained at an accelerated rate, narrowing the achievement gap" (Kagan, 1998, p. 2).

Cooperative learning is the cornerstone for developing Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). As teachers learn in schools, students will also learn (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). When teachers collaborate to make their classrooms a place of learning instead of the traditional style of teaching, continued learning will be the result.

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PLCs support the belief that student learning improves when clear targets are established, assessments are aligned with target data, and instructional strategies are based on assessment outcomes. Student learning can and will improve if educators look within schools, instead of always looking to the outside for answers (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004).

Teachers are resource-rich in schools but choose to play the blame game, blaming every possible entity outside the school walls. Educators are forever blaming the district, state, parents, and lack of money for reasons why all students are not learning. Through research, empirical evidence will prove that there is another option within schools that can and will improve student learning (DuFour & DuFour, 2004).

When teachers decide to have student learning be a main focus, then the journey may begin toward continuous improvement. By doing this, education will move away from the more traditional style of teaching. With guidance from the teacher, the students' learning will be directed by the learner (Dewey, 1938). In the book *Whatever it Takes,* the authors introduce PLCs as a way to improve student learning (DuFour, Dufour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004). To further define the meaning behind PLCs:

* Professional-someone with the expertise in a specialized field expected to remain current in its evolving knowledge base.

* Learning-ongoing action and perpetual curiosity: ongoing study and constant practice.

* Community-an environment that fosters mutual cooperation, emotional support, and personal growth as they work together to achieve what they cannot accomplish alone (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, pp. xi-xii).

Process of Professional Learning Communities

Educators in PLCs embrace the notion that the fundamental purpose for school is learning, not teaching—an enormous distinction. Dewey (1938) would say a traditional teacher is concerned with giving facts and information and not guiding learning through experience. This emphasis on learning leads those within the school to concentrate their effort and energy on three critical questions:

1. What is it educators want all students to learn—by grade level, by course, and by unit of instruction?

2. How will teachers know when each student has acquired the intended knowledge and skills?

3. How will educators respond when students experience initial difficulty so that teachers can improve upon current levels of learning? (DuFour & DuFour, 2006, p. 6).

Dewey may not agree with the three critical questions for students' learning; he may think they are too rigid. But on the other hand, he would be in support of teachers' working together in a progressive manner to improve student learning. "The basic structure of the PLC is composed of collaborative teams whose members work interdependently to achieve common goals. The team is the engine that drives the PLC effort. People who engage in collaborative team learning are able to learn from one

another and thus create momentum to fuel continuous improvement" (DuFour & Dufour, 2004, p.3).

At Boones Mill Elementary, in West Virginia, the teachers realized they were the available resource to improve learning in their school. They decided to initiate a team learning process. The teachers recognized the need to identify student learning needs quickly and the importance of a consistent plan of standards and processes in identifying those students that needed scaffolding in order to achieve. They also needed a plan for identifying exactly what skills the student was not able to master (DuFour & DeFour, 2004). Teaching teams of all the teachers of a grade level and the special education teacher who served that grade level were able to meet these challenges by engaging in a 5-step team learning process (DuFour & DuFour, 2004, p. 99).

Step One: Identify the 16 to 20 most essential outcomes (knowledge and skills) that all students MUST learn in each content area at each grade that school year. Each team begins the process by collecting and studying state, local and national resources; checking lists of skills and data received from summative assessments; looking a "Wish lists" of critical skills identified by teachers at the next grade level, and examining text books and teacher-made units of previous years. Once targets (essential outcomes) are established then teachers continue to discuss the best way to sequence curriculum to get the best results and to determine common pacing guides (DuFour & DuFour, 2004, p. 99).

Step Two: Develop at least four formative common assessments designed to assist each team in answering the question, "How will we know when each child has learned

the essential outcomes?" The idea is that all teachers have a buy in to the learning targets and they decide how they will be taught within their own classroom. Therefore they are not taking away academic freedom of individual teachers (DuFour, & DuFour, 2004, p. 100).

To do this, teams look at available assessments at all levels; state, district, building and individual classrooms. Assessments should have a variety of items; multiple choice, true/false, fill-in the blank, and short and extended answers. Other assessments could include performance based; for example portfolios, writing prompts, projects and oral presentations. The teacher teams work together to come up with common assessments while at the same time agreeing on the scoring of the common assessments. Every teacher involved has to agree to common administration of the assessments. If the administration of the assessments are not consistent than the results will not be accurate enough to evaluate if all students are learning (DuFour & DuFour, 2004).

Step Three: Set target scores all students must achieve to demonstrate proficiency in each skill on each common assessment.

Along with common assessments, the teachers come to a decision on what would constitute proficiency in each skill. The score needs to be fair as well as challenging. Some targets could be set at 80 out of 100 possible points while others required a minimum score of three on a five point rubric. Every student must show proficiency in each skill, even those struggling with the target (DuFour & DuFour, 2004, p. 102).

Step Four: Administer the common assessments and analyze results.

Assessments should be the same and be given on the same day and at the same time in all classrooms; thus having all classrooms subject to the same circumstances. After assessments are given then the data are complied by the principal or another designated person. The data are analyzed by teachers and identified for areas of concern. Teachers look at the proficiency of every target area. Then they compare results with teachers that are teaching the same targets. This is a time when teachers can see what they do well in their teaching and what they can do to improve learning for all students. The assessments are intended to be formative rather than summative (assessment for learning rather than assessment of learning) (DuFour & DuFour, 2004, p. 102).

Step Five: Celebrate strengths and identify and implement improvement strategies (DuFour & DuFour, 2004, p. 103).

In the Manitoba Association of School Superintendents Journal (MASS), it states, "Every student must believe that I am in control of my own success and I am succeeding at learning because of my good work" (Stiggins, 2005, p. 9).

In the book, *Life in a Crowded Place,* Peterson (1992) also stresses achievement celebrations. Students' confidence grows when high levels of achievement are attained by themselves and their classmates, thus creating a learning community.

In the work at the Assessment Training Institute, a concept that heralds a very exciting new vision of the relationship between assessment and the emotions of student success; with assessment for learning, all students can experience the ongoing joy and expectation of success; that is, optimism. In this way no child need be left behind (Stiggins, 2005, p. 9).

The data collected from the common assessments make it possible for all teams to identify program strengths—skills and concepts in which all or almost all students achieve the team's target. The teams are able to identify and recognize individual students for high achievement or notable improvement. At the same time, however, each team also can identify at least one area of their program that can be improved. Furthermore, individual teachers are able to identify problem areas in their teaching and then call upon teammates for help in addressing those areas (DuFour & DuFour, 2004). This process enhances the effectiveness of both the team and its individual members. As Mike Schmoker (2003) writes, "instructional improvements depend on such simple data-driven format-teams identifying and addressing areas of difficulty and then developing, critiquing, testing and upgrading efforts in light of ongoing results" (p. 22).

He is referring to the on-going process of constantly looking at formative assessment data as a way of improving continuous learning. Rather than relying on assessments as the source of information upon which to decide who gets rewarded and punished-that is, for determining the winners and losers-teachers use assessment as a road map from start to ultimate success. Success at learning becomes its own reward, promoting confidence and persistence. This changes the emotional dynamics in immensely productive ways for all students, especially for those who have not yet met standard (Stiggins, 2005). Foremost, this process will identify any student who has not achieved the target proficiency score on each skill or concept being assessed (Dufour & DuFour, 2004).

Once a child has been identified, what will be done to help him or her become

proficient? DuFour & DuFour (2004) have many suggestions to help a school with what

would be the best fit for them. A few ideas are:

Each grade level has access to a tutor for a minimum of 30 minutes a day.

The tutorial time has to be consistent and constant among all classrooms.

The time could not conflict with any direct instructional blocks (such as language arts,

math science, social studies).

This tutorial time cannot interfere with the student's recess or other fun activities.

Offer a study hall time for students to work on different strategies for achieving

proficiency on the targets.

Offer an extension time for students that are proficient in targets for enrichment learning

(pp. 104-106).

<p style="text-align:center">Successful Learning Communities</p>

Boones Mill Elementary has received national attention for implementing the

above strategies in their school. Boones Mill is one of seven schools in Virginia to be

nominated for the United States Department of Education's new No Child Left Behind

Blue Ribbon Award. *The Video Journal* (2001, 2003) has featured Boones Mill in two

different programs on high-performing elementary schools.

Los Penasquitos Elementary School, located in Penasquitos near San Diego,

California has also benefited from these strategies to improve learning in their school. Los

Penasquitos' 748 students live in a mix of apartment buildings, low-income housing, and

middle-class homes that surround the school. While Boones Mill has some ethnic and socioeconomic diversity in its student population, Los Penasquitos students are very diverse. They come from homes of abject poverty as well as considerable affluence. They represent dozens of nationalities that speak 28 different languages. What the schools do have in common are teachers who are committed to the success of all of their students (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Karhanek, 2004).

In 2002, Los Penasquitos had an increase in every assessed area of study and in every grade. For example, listed below are the statistics for reading and math:

Percent of Students above the 75th Percentile

	Reading		Math	
	1998	2002	1998	2002
Grade 2	25%	57%	45%	78%
Grade 3	21%	38%	43%	61%
Grade 4	33%	44%	30%	66%
Grade 5	31%	40%	39%	67%

Percent of Students Below the 25th percentile

	Reading		Math	
	1998	2002	1998	2002
Grade 2	22%	7%	14%	6%
Grade 3	25%	8%	15 %	3%
Grade 4	22%	9%	22%	7%
Grade 5	18%	14%	18%	8%

Los Penasquitos' attention to each student's learning not only moved many students out of the bottom quartile of this nationally normed test (Texas Assessment of Academic Skills), it also dramatically increased the number of students able to score in the top quartile of the nation (DuFour &, DuFour, 2004). Dewey (1938) supports this outcome in his statement, "The control of individual actions is affected by the whole situation in which individuals are involved, in which they share and in which they are co-operative or interacting parts" (p. 53). This school made a conscience decision to involve everyone in the learning process, as a result learning improved.

Another example of these strategies working is being demonstrated in South Charlotte Middle School (SCMS), located in Charlotte, North Carolina. In 2004, SCMS was named "A School to Watch," by the National Forum to Accelerate Middle Grades Reform. Through collaboration, the teachers developed a ninth block, an extension to the school day, into their schedule. This block is available for all students. It is being used for enrichment as well as extra support in areas in which students may be struggling. After three years of implementation, the diverse academic and elective needs of every group of students at SCMS continue to be more effectively met. The ninth block allows students to select more traditional electives, gain support through remediation, enhance their analytical skills, and explore areas of personal interest all while still meeting state mandated course requirements. This change was brought on by the teachers' desire to find a way to improve the learning of every student. Collaborating techniques between teachers, administration and staff was the key in accomplishing this (Patterson, 2006).

Multicultural Schools

The turn of the 21st Century brought a change in the ethnic backgrounds of school classrooms in the country. Forty percent of the nation's classrooms will be non-white, with the majority Latino (Valencia, 1996). The student population will continue to change, but the teachers will remain mostly white. Without on going professional development to address these issues the schools will continue to run as they have for the last several decades (Calderon, 1997). Historically, the education for multicultural students has been addressed by short-term federally funded programs specializing in providing bilingual instruction in elementary schools and ESL programs in secondary schools (Calderon, 1997). While these programs have been successful for the individual needs of students, the programs have isolated the students and their teachers from the rest of the school population. These students have not benefited from the higher level of expectations, or equality of education experienced by the other students in the school (Cummins, 1993; Lucas, 1993; National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1994).

Characteristics of successful schools were found in a recent study where the student population was 66.6% Mexican American from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and where a high percentage of the students were limited in English proficiency (Reyes, Scribner, & Paredes Scribner, 1999). These high performing schools shared the same characteristics of other high performing schools that did not have a majority of their population being non-white, and were urban communities (Edmonds, 1979).

When comparing high achieving schools, regardless of student population, one would find similar results with test scores and continued success in schools (Paredes, Alicia, Scribner, & Scribner, Jay D., 1999). The commonality between the two schools was characterized as communities of learners where students came first and teachers set high expectations for successful learning. The learning is owned and directed by the student. These effective schools for Mexican Americans ignored the barriers that have plagued these students in the past referencing them as deficit learners.

These successful schools embrace the Professional Learning Communities strategies as well as adding some of their own practices. The involvement of community and parents is strongly stressed and ingrained in the learning process of all students. The culture of the students is embraced in the school climate. By doing this the parents are more than willing to participate and support their children's education (Paredes, Alicia, Scribner, & Scribner, Jay D., 1999).

To further emphasize the importance of teacher's high expectation for students, other skills also need to be present for student achievement. Teacher's stress acquisition and development of literacy skills throughout the content areas to enhance language and cognitive development. Cultural diversity is celebrated and the school climate is conducive to learning and high achievement. Research confirms the presence of organizational variables, such as inclusive leadership, that creates a sense of community, drawing everyone into the learning process, while at the same time preventing the alienation by teachers, students, parents, or the community (Paredes, Alicia, Scribner, & Scribner, Jay D., 1999).

In a more recent study a middle school with 85% of the population qualifying for

free and reduced lunch, located in a rural agricultural community 50 miles from a large

city, has had similar success with closing the achievement gap. Approximately 50% of

the students speak English as a second language and 45% are members of migratory

families at King Middle School (Ginsberg, Margery B., 2003). King Middle School

followed the same strategies as the Mexican American School and had very favorable

results. The students' scores at King Middle School were above the national norms and

have been recognized for the number of students from diverse backgrounds that score

well above the required competency levels of state tests. The message is the same for

both schools- a stimulating place of learning where all students feel respected and

supported as people, students, and world citizens (Ginsberg, Margery B., 2003).

Limitations of Professional Learning Communities

The Annenberg Institute for School Reform (AISR) has done substantial research on

Professional Learning Communities. In large part the research did support the findings

that PLCs are worth the time and effort involved in the implementation process. But as

research was conducted, findings were also found and studied that do not always support

the premise that PLCs work in every school (AISR, 1998). The first and foremost aspect

that needs to be in place is a strong leader. As Peter Drucker (1996), p. xiv) wrote,

"Leaders...delegate a good many things; they have to or they drown in trivia. But they

don't delegate the one thing that they can do that will truly make a difference, the one

thing they want to be remembered for. They do it" (p. xiv). Principals who hope to lead

learning communities must be unequivocal champions, promoters, and protectors of key

PLC concepts, and that is not a job they can delegate to someone else (DuFour & Dufour, 2004).

Recent research has suggested that literature on PLCs has not been examined for its empirical findings in teachers' practices and students' learning as a result of professional learning communities (NSRF research Forum, January, 2006). DuFour (2004), suggests that the term professional learning communities has been used very loosely and everyone from grade level teams to state departments of education are framing their work in professional learning community. By using the term PLC does not mean that a PLC does, in fact, exist. The evidence of the success of PLCs must show what aspect of the PLC support changes that report in improved learning (NSRF, 2006).

All ten research articles used and analyzed by NSRF research team support the idea that participation in a learning community has led to changes in teaching practices. However it was difficult to find out what exactly the teachers did in their teaching practices before the implementation of learning communities. A two year study conducted by the Anneberg Institute for School Reform, found that classrooms became more student-centered over time because of the implementation of PLCs. The participants of the study also increased added flexibility of classroom arrangements and changes in pace of instruction to accommodate for varying levels of student success (NSRF, 2006). Since the previous teaching practices were not reported, then the power of the findings does not, in its entirety, support improved learning as a result of learning communities (Englert and Tarrant, 1995). Furthermore, ten studies failed to describe specific changes in teaching practices with empirical evidence. Findings were reported,

through interviews, that teachers' felt their teaching improved since the implementation of PLCs (NSRF, 2006).

Another inconsistency in student achievement results was found in the work of Supovitz (2002) and Supovitz and Christman, (2003). This came about because the effort put forth by teachers was not uniformed with all participating teachers. Teachers that concentrated on one instructional practice found favorable results in student achievement, but teachers that did not concentrate on one aspect of teaching, found results that were inconsistent in improved learning for students. There is limited evidence on student improvements that attributed to a learning community, beyond teacher perception.

<div align="center">Discussion of Literature</div>

The majority of the research supports that implementing a Professional Learning Community will improve learning for all students. The results are positive in schools all over the country because teachers decide to work together and improve learning for all children. Dewey (1938) does an excellent job of summarizing learning communities in his book, *Experience and Education*. He writes,

> It is possible to force the activity of the young into channels which express the teacher's purpose rather than that of the pupils. But the way to avoid this danger is not for the adult to with draw entirely. The teacher needs to be intelligently aware of the capacities, needs, and past experiences of those under instruction, and secondly, to allow the suggestion made to develop into a plan and project means of further suggestions contributed and organized into a whole by the members of the group. The plan in other words, is a co-operative enterprise, not

addictation (pp.71-72).

Peterson (1992) also supports the premise for learning communities. He states,

there have always been teachers who have not only wanted more for their students

than participating in a good behavior game and getting the right answer to

someone else's questions, but have also known how to get the job done. These

teachers have done more than trust students, call on students to take the initiative,

and value what students thought they had talent to bring a group together, keep it

together, and teach how to learn together. Their teaching demonstrates that they

knew the contribution social life can make to learning. These teachers are

masterful at making learning communities (p. 2).

Learning Communities, if implemented correctly, will improve student learning. The

intent of Learning Communities supports Dewey's philosophy, along with other experts

in the field of education, and how they would like to see progressive education practiced.

CHAPTER III

PROJECT PROCEDURE

Background

The population growth of the students in Ashwood School District exceeded the capacity of their middle school in 2002. Jackson Middle School's capacity was 600 and in 2003 the school had over 800 students, in two grade levels. The school board voted to build another school for the intermediate grades. The school district decided to have two intermediate schools in the district, educating grades 5, 6 and 7. They moved the 5th graders out of the elementary schools, making it an intermediate school as opposed to a middle school of grades 6 and 7. In the spring of 2004, the new principal of Jackson Intermediate School found himself with a 45 year old school and 1/3 less of the staff from the previous year. The other 2/3 of the staff went with the old principal to the new intermediate school. Jackson's principal took the opportunity to recruit many teachers from the elementary schools. Elementary school teachers were accustomed to teaching all subjects and were already in the practice of collaborating with their colleagues. Jackson's principal felt this was the time to institute a school that centered on Professional Learning Communities. The vision was for any meaningful or sustained change to occur, it was critical to first develop the attitudes and attributes of a Professional Learning Community (OSPI January, 2007). The belief was that starting a new school and instituting PLCs would put students' central to all teaching and learning efforts, thus closing the achievement gap and making it possible for all students to learn.

Project Procedure

As a result of the implementation of PLCs it was determined that some type of pamphlet (Perfect Pamphlet) would need to be developed in order to get the desired information out to parents, students and teachers. The idea was to write out learning targets for all grade levels in each subject area. Also to be included would be school wide expectations for behavior and common developmental changes for intermediate school age children.

The first step of this process was to decide on a format that was easy to distribute, read and understand. Next the learning targets needed to be determined. This was accomplished by reviewing the Washington State Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs). This literature is very complex with numerous learning objectives. It was cut down to 10-15 essential learning targets in each subject area that the teachers wanted the students to learn.

The first Perfect Pamphlet was made with the learning targets for 5th grade at Jackson Intermediate School. The learning targets focused on math, reading, writing, literacy, science, US History, Washington State History, Arts, Music, and Physical Education. In addition to the state requirements there are also many expectations the teachers at Jackson Intermediate School wanted their students to learn. For example, the language arts teachers had learning targets that go above and beyond the state requirements. Some of these targets, in 5th grade, are learning Greek and Latin root words, applying thinking maps, and graphic organizers in all subject areas and rate of fluency in reading different types of text. These were all included in the Perfect Pamphlet.

Another important part of the learning process was acceptable behavior at the intermediate level. Students were taught the school wide behavior expectations in the first few days of school. The common behavior matrix for Jackson Intermediate School was included in the Perfect Pamphlet as a reminder to students, parents and teachers. With expectations also came opportunities for 5th grade students that were not made available to the other grade levels. These opportunities were included in the Perfect Pamphlet. A few of these opportunities included the Outdoor Education day camp that is offered to 5th grade students every fall. Another opportunity the Free Ski day at Mammoth Cliff Resort. This is a day when 5th graders are taught how to ski or snow board, with all equipment supplied. Finally, it was important to include the developmental changes an intermediate school student will go through while attending intermediate school. This was a good way to inform parents that the behaviors their children are exhibiting are normal for their age group.

Project Development

Starting the actual writing of the Perfect Pamphlet involved collaboration by all the 5th grade teachers. They got together and went through their curriculum and chose the 10-15 learning targets that they agreed they wanted their students to learn in all subject areas required to be taught at the 5th grade level. It was also necessary to contact the supporting teachers that teach all students in the building and get the targets that they wanted the 5th grade students to learn. This would include the physical education teacher, librarian, art, drama, and music teachers. In order to get the behavior targets and

developmental changes the counselor, dean of students, principal and psychologist were involved in the collaboration process of developing the targets in their area of expertise.

After the data was collected by all people involved it was necessary to put the information in a pamphlet that was organized in a way for all parties reading this Perfect Pamphlet to understand it. It was pertinent that the information was laid out in a logical manner that made sense to parents, teacher and students. It was presented as a guide and reference to all interested parties. Lastly, the information in the Perfect Pamphlet will need to be accessible for on going changes. For instance, if a teacher wants to change learning targets or combine learning targets, then the Perfect Pamphlet will need to be updated on a regular basis. For this Perfect Pamphlet to be successful it will need to be always re-visited and updated as changes in learning and teaching occur.

Project Implementation

This Perfect Pamphlet will be implemented in the fall of 2009 at Jackson Intermediate School. It will be available for teachers before school starts, so they can review their contribution to the Perfect Pamphlet. This will also give time for last minute updates and changes. Distribution of the Perfect Pamphlet will happen at the open house for parents in late September. During the open house, the teachers will explain to parents how the Perfect Pamphlet can be used as a resource throughout the school year. Students will be introduced to the Perfect Pamphlet during the first days of school and will know where the location of the Perfect Pamphlet will be in the classrooms for easy access. It is this writer's hope that this Perfect Pamphlet will become an easy reference guide for all

teachers, parents and students. This pamphlet may be a resource for other intermediate

schools in the Ashwood School District.

CHAPTER IV

DESCRIPTION OF THE PERFECT PAMPHLET

This Perfect Pamphlet was designed to help teachers, administrators, and students succeed at Jackson Intermediate School in Ashwood School District. The Perfect Pamphlet is a resource guide that aids in the transition from elementary school to intermediate school. This guide lays out the academic expectations for a 5th grade students at Jackson Intermediate School as well as offers tips and other information.

The Perfect Pamphlet starts out with the Learning Targets that are consistent with the Washington State's Essential Academic Learning Requirements. The Learning Targets are based on all academic areas that are required for a 5th grader to accomplish before moving on to the 6th grade. The targets are in math, reading writing, literacy, science, US History, art, physical education, and music. This Perfect Pamphlet is an easy and quick reference that supports the 5th grade requirements in the state of Washington.

Most will agree that academics are important in the success of all students, but at the same time there are other strategies that help students succeed during their intermediate school years. The pamphlet contains Common Developmental Characteristics for all students attending Jackson Intermediate School that can assist in developing these other strategies.

The Jackson Intermediate School Behavior Plan is also included in this pamphlet. This Behavior Plan explains behavior expectations for all students at Jackson Intermediate School. The staff used the school mascot, a Husky, and developed an easy format to write out behavior expectations. Each letter in the word TRACKS represents

the positive behaviors that teachers and administration want to be displayed and modeled by all students in all areas of the school building.

It goes without saying that parental support is very important for Jackson Intermediate School to be successful. There are several tips in the Perfect Pamphlet that parents can use to help their student succeed academically as well as socially. It is stressed to parents how vital it is to work together as a team with the staff at Jackson in order to make their child's educational experience successful.

Finally, the Perfect Pamphlet has its own areas just for the student. It gives the students information with examples for common occurrences that may come up during the intermediate school years. For example, being in school everyday will help students to do well in school. Perfect attendance does not guarantee good grades, but not coming to school will guarantee bad grades. This area offers solutions for the students when issues come up concerning academic and or social situations.

SUMMARY

Coming to intermediate school can be a stressful time for both students and parents. It is the hope of the teachers and administration that this Perfect Pamphlet will be the reassurance the parents and students need when first coming to Jackson Intermediate School. Initially, the Perfect Pamphlet will help conquer some of the anxiety surrounding intermediate school but will also be a great resource guide for all information needed for any student coming to Jackson Intermediate School to achieve academically and socially.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Summary

During the 2003-2004 school year, Jackson Intermediate School embarked on a

multi-step process involving various stakeholders - parents, students, counselors,

teachers, administrators, and community entities - to create a transition action plan for the

2004-2005 school year. The group began the process in the spring of 2004 with the

Grade Realignment Task Force examining mission, vision, beliefs, and critical success

factors. In the fall of 2004, stakeholders identified standards and goals that provided the

foundation for a detailed action plan created by the new intermediate school staff,

parents, and administration. In the spring of 2006 Jackson's staff, through examination

of current practice and procedures, established Professional Learning Communities.

The basic structure of the PLC is composed of collaborative teams whose members work

interdependently to achieve common goals. Systematic processes engage each member

of the organization in the consideration of four key questions:

1. What is the fundamental purpose?

2. What does Jackson Intermediate School hope to become?

3. What are the strategies for getting better?

4. What criteria will be used to assess improvement efforts?

Educators in PLC's embrace the notion that the fundamental purpose of school is

learning, not teaching - an enormous distinction. This emphasis on learning leads those

within Jackson to concentrate their effort and energy on four critical questions:

1. What is it every student should learn?

2. How will it be determined if the student learned it?

3. What will be done if the student did not learn it?

4. What will the response be to the students who have already learned it?

The successful program at Jackson models the foundation, collaboration, assessment, and flexibility necessary to improve student learning. Schools generally experience limited success by employing parts or pieces of the whole. By modifying, through collaboration, schools can create a successful system of student achievement.

Conclusions

The Jackson Intermediate program foundation lies in the belief that all students can and will learn. To realize this belief, Jackson's staff implemented an effective, research-based practice and used a multi-tiered model to vary intensity and bring high quality instruction to all students. The professional development program consists of three main parts: (1) workshops, coaching, demonstrations, and seminars; (2) criteria for the selection of research based materials; and (3) support for systemic changes needed for program implementation. Student learning, not teaching, becomes the priority.

The goal of Jackson Intermediate School is to enhance the capacity to boost student learning, and establish a collaborative culture. Eastwood and Lewis (2001) state, "Creating a collarborative culture is the single most important factor for successful school improvement initiatives and first order of business for those seeking to enhance the effectiveness of their schools" (p.3). Jackson Intermediate created collaborative teams to share responsibility for the learning of their students by focusing the curriculum, sharing

the assessment results, and creating a system of interventions that used existing time differently.

<div align="center">Implications</div>

If Professional Learning Communities are not implemented and monitored constantly then there is a chance that they will be ineffective at improving student learning (AISR, 1998). Jackson Intermediate School discovered that teachers needed to go more in-depth with collaborating than just the sharing of lesson plans. The teachers realized they must critically look at their teaching from a student's point of view. The question to be asked would be "What can I do as a teacher to make my teaching better so my students will achieve academic success."

The Perfect Pamphlet was created by teachers. Teachers came together in subject areas making a professional learning community. Time was spent creating learning targets, with the student perspective in mind, in all subject areas. This Perfect Pamphlet outlines the requirements for students during their intermediate school years. The learning targets are aligned with the state standards. The students, parents, teachers and administrators will be aware of the expectations for a 5th grade student at Jackson Intermediate School. If this Perfect Pamphlet is not used or introduced properly then its effectiveness will be lost along with improving student learning.

As the PLC begins to develop, the trust level among colleagues needs to be intact. This is a time where teachers have to keep their main goal of higher student achievement in the forefront. The personal part of teaching should be laid aside and a confidence of improving teaching needs to emerge (AISR, 1998). Next, the teachers and support staff involved in the PLCs must keep adequate documentation of data collected. The data

obtained should be properly analyzed and examined in order to change what is going on in the classroom. Finally and most importantly, if time, space and autonomy are not in accordance with the implementation of PLCs, then they will be ineffective (AISR, 1998). The awareness of the above issues can be overcome with the desire and commitment by all to execute successful Professional Learning Communities.

Recommendations

The resources are available for every teacher to use and implement in his/her schools. By studying state standards, district guides, state assessments and textbooks, Jackson Intermediate School was able to find the necessary information to establish 10-20 essential learning targets at each grade by subject area. PLC teams were then able to align the curriculum to ensure all students will achieve the learning targets. This information was put into the Perfect Pamphlet and will be used as a resource guide for teachers, students, support staff and parents. This Perfect Pamphlet also addresses the changes that occur in behavior with intermediate school students. It will explore the developmental changes for parents to use to help their child to adjust during the intermediate school years. The student is not forgotten in this Perfect Pamphlet. There is a section in the Perfect Pamphlet that gives tips and strategies just for students to use to help them make their experiences in intermediate school a successful one. This Perfect Pamphlet takes great quantities of information and condenses it down to a readable and usable document for all that are involved in the success of intermediate school students.

A variety of common, formative assessments based on the essential targets are administered to all the students in the grade level following an initial period of instruction that corresponds to the curriculum guide. Rick Stiggins (2005) contends "That teachers

are engaged in assessment for learning when they work together for student achievement" (P.183). Other schools and districts may need to start with common unit assessments. This is a learning process. Data must be easily accessible, purposely arranged and publicly discussed.

Interventions for students who do not achieve the learning targets must be developed locally so teachers, principals and parents are comfortable. Jackson found the following suggestions to be helpful for the success of all students: (1) offer intervention and extension during the school day; (2) make participation in the interventions mandatory, no opting out; and (3) make interventions flexible, students must have an opportunity to work themselves out.

No system of interventions can compensate for weak and ineffective teaching. At the same time a school is working to develop time and support for student learning, it must take time for professional development. Jackson Intermediate School is always learning, revising and willing to improve the foundation of its programs for the sole purpose of improving student learning.

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APPENDIX

Perfect Pamphlet

The following pages have the Perfect Pamphlet formatted in publisher software. This is the original form of the Perfect Pamphlet before it was made into booklet form. Booklet form of the Perfect Pamphlet is also included.

Jackson Intermediate School

5th Grade Learning Targets

2009-10 School Year

Behavior Matrix for School-wide Expectations in Common Areas					
School-wide	Assembly	Bus	Restroom	Computer Lab	Office
Truthful	Stay with your class during assembly.	WALK on bus ramp.	Use the restroom only when you need to.	Staying on appropriate internet sites.	Ask permission to use the phone in all offices. Use phone for emergency only.
Responsible	Keep hands and feet to self.	Be ready to board the bus when it arrives.	Ask permission and have planner signed before using restroom during class time.	Take care of all equipment in classroom.	Report to the office promptly when called. Return forms to Offices promptly.
Accepting	Listen and watch carefully.	Obey all bus ramp rules. Listen to adults on bus ramp and do as asked.	Treat others with respect while using the restroom.	Help others on the computers. Share fairly with others.	Wait patiently to be helped at the front counter.
Cooperative	Do what adults request the first time.	Keep your place in line. Do not hold spots for others. Stay single file.	Contact an adult when there are problems in the restroom.	Follow along with the instructor.	When using the phone ALWAYS use polite voice.
Kind	Show appreciation by clapping.	Keep hand to your self while waiting for	Report any writing on the walls to an adult.	Only use "PUT-UPS"	Use polite voice. Use "Please and Thank
vs Respect	Pay attention to those leading the assembly.	Speak kindly to others and bus ramp supervisors.	Keep restroom clean. Contact an adult when there are problems in the restroom.	Raise hand when you have questions or need help. Wait patiently for the teacher to help.	You should only be in the office if you have business there.

Adapted by Sterling Intermediate School

Be Organized
- Use a student planner or an assignment notebook
- Have a separate folder for each class
- Have phone numbers for classmates in case you have a question
- Keep your locker and backpack neat
- Get everything organized for the next day before you go to bed

"I use an assignment planner. It helps me stay on track and get things done on time." James

Manage Your Time Well
- Use any extra time in school to get started on homework
- Have a regular time to study
- Break large assignments down into smaller parts

"I make a list for myself each day, and I check things off when they're done." Jennifer

Study Smart
- Find a good place to study
- Organize your study time
- Break large assignments down into smaller parts
- Allow more time for homework than you think you'll need
- Know how to use a computer to write papers and do research
- Use tricks to help you memorize things
- Know what material the test is going to cover

"Before I start to study, I figure out what I need to do and what order I'm going to do it in. I also try to do the most important things first." Marisa

Elements of Visual Arts
- Understands and demonstrates the use of line through direction, type, and quality
- Understands and demonstrates the relationship of 2D and 3D forms
- Uses a color wheel to demonstrate color relationships
- Recognizes and demonstrates actual and simulated texture
- Recognizes and uses spatial devices and concepts to create depth
- Recognizes and demonstrates a range of values
- Identifies and applies principles of balance, repetition, emphasis and movement in an artwork
- Uses a variety of techniques in observational drawing
- Uses different 2D mediums to create textural effects
- Combines media for visual and expressive purposes

Fifth Graders

Fifth graders are generally happy and relaxed, enjoying themselves and their peers, parents, even siblings. Proud of all they have accomplished, they like to share their knowledge with others. Tens usually do well with group projects because they tend to be calm and naturally cooperative.

Social
- Good age for clubs, team sports, and whole class activities.
- Eager to reach out to others...community service or tutoring younger children.
- Boys and girls work well together.
- Quick to anger and quick to forgive
- Competitive but also cooperative
- Listen well but also enjoy talking and explaining
- Enjoy adult recognition

Physical
- Need lots of outdoor play and physical challenges
- Snacks and rest periods help rapidly growing bodies
- Better at small muscle movements; enjoy precision tasks such as tracing and copying.

Cognitive
- Very good at memorizing facts
- Enjoy collecting, organizing, and classifying
- Like rules and logic
- Can concentrate on reading and thinking for long periods
- Hardworking; take pride in school work
- Enjoy choral reading, poetry, plays, and singing

Sixth Graders

Sixth graders are going through huge changes in their bodies, minds, and social behavior as they begin adolescence. The easy friendliness of ten often gives way to awkward behavior at eleven. With their growing capacity for higher thinking, children at this age like to try work that feels grown up, such as researching and interviewing.

Social
- Moody, self-absorbed
- Easily embarrassed; need to "save face" in front of peers.
- Sensitive about their changing bodies
- Need lots of time to talk with peers
- Common age for girls to form cliques
- Like to challenge rules, argue, and test limits
- Need adult empathy, humor, and light attitude to help them take things less seriously.

Physical
- Restless and energetic
- Need lots of food, physical activity, and sleep
- "Growing Pains" may cause nightly aches and daily complaints
- More colds, ear infections, flu, etc.

Cognitive
- Abstract thinking; ability to understand ideas such as "justice"
- Beginning to challenge adult explanations and their own assumptions
- Would rather learn new skills than review or improve previous work
- Enjoy using their developing thinking skills to do brain teasers and puzzles.
- Like "adult" tasks (researching, interviewing, footnoting, etc.) and "adult" studies, (history, biography, etc.)

Seventh Graders

Seventh graders are often unpredictable and hard to read as they swing between childhood and adulthood. Their greatest need is to be with peers as they sort through physical, social, and emotional challenges and the all-important identity question, "Who am I?"

Social
- Peer opinions matter more than those of teachers and parents
- Question and argue with adults about rules; need adults to listen to their ideas.
- More willing to accept guidance from adults other than teachers and parents.
- Capable of self-awareness, insight and empathy.
- Can take on major responsibilities
- Careless with "unimportant" things such as cleaning their room and keeping track of assignments.
- Like both group and individual work.

Physical
- Very energetic; need lots of sleep, exercise, and food
- Enjoy physical education and sports

Cognitive
- Begin to excel at subject (science) or skill (drawing).
- Understand and enjoy sarcasm, double meanings, and sophisticated jokes.
- Enthusiastic about school work they see as purposeful; i.e., research projects, science experiments, and drama productions.
- Can set goals and concentrate well
- Very interested in civics, history, current events, environmental issues, and social justice.

Systems
- When presented with a system, students will be able to identify various parts and properties of that system.
- Predict and explain how a system would work if one of its parts was missing or broken.
- Students will recognize simple machines as a physical system, the earth's structure as an earth and space system, and an ecosystem as a living system and describe how various systems interconnect and relate to each other.

Inquiry
- When given a testable question, students will be able to organize and write a proper prediction, list of materials, procedure that includes a data chart, and a conclusion.
- Students will identify and appropriately use variables that stay the same (controlled), variables that change (manipulated), and variable that are measured (responding.)

Content
Physical Science
- Describe the motion of an object in terms of distance and time.
- Investigate and report how a larger force acting on an object causes a greater change in motion of that object.

Earth and Space
- Identify and describe various landmasses, bodies of water, and landforms and how weathering and erosion affects them.
- Observe and describe a fossil in a rock. Know that fossils provide evidence about plants and animals that lived long ago and the nature of the environment at that time.

nists that led them to revolt
- Examine the major ideas expressed in the Declaration of Independence and how these ideas shaped the thinking of the founders of the nation
- Recognize the inconsistencies stated in the Declaration of Independence and the conditions of the time

Founding the Nation
History
- Describe how the colonies changed as they established themselves as one nation
- Describe the major conflicts among the colonies as they created one nation
- Describe the contribution of various cultural groups to the early development of the United States

Civics
- Identify the key values and principles of the Constitution
- Examine how well the national government and our Constitution has protected individual right and promoted the common good both then and now
- Analyze the significance of the Bill of Rights both then and now
- Examine how the three branches of check and balance each other
- Explain the role of citizen in American democracy

Elements of Dance
- Perform movement which includes accent and rest (time)
- Creates and performs free and controlled movement (energy)
- Creates a simple dance, combining a variety of dance elements and principles of organization (choreography)

Elements of Music
- Identifies and uses the following musical notation: sharp, flat, tie (notation)
- Aurally discriminates between major and minor (pitch, beat, rhythm)
- Performs melodic and harmonic lines within an ensemble (melody, harmony)
- Identifies and performs simple musical forms (form)

Elements of Theatre
- Identifies and describes character traits with a scene / play
- Identifies and describes the use of mood within the setting of a scene / play
- Identifies and describes the sequence of actions that make up the beginning middle and end of a scene / play
- Identifies multiple conflict resolutions with plot in a scene / play
- Identifies and describes costume, set, props, sound as elements of design in a scene / play
- Compares and contrasts main ideas in multiple scenes / plays
- Identifies and uses voice to communicate character
- Identifies movement to communicate character
- Identifies and uses emotional and sensory recall to create character
- Identifies and uses ensemble skills in scene / play
- Identifies and uses appropriate focus techniques while participating in scene / play

When you make good choices and decisions, you get the rewards. When you make poor choices and decisions, you have to accept the consequences.

Now that you are in intermediate school, you're going to have more freedom and independence than you've ever had before. Of course, with greater freedom comes greater responsibility. Remember, you are responsible for you actions and for the choices that you make.

The Decision-Making Process
You will be making lots of decisions during intermediate school, and so it's very important that you have good decision-making skills. When you're faced with a difficult decision, try using the steps below:

1) Figure out what your choices are.
2) Write down the positive and negative things about each choice.
3) Make sure that you have all of the information you need.
4) Think about your choices, and make your decision.

Deal with Stress, Anger and Bullies
In intermediate school, some students feel more stress and get angry more often. Here are some strategies you can use when you feel stressed out or angry.
1) Take a deep breath, and then slowly release it. Do this until you feel your body relax.
2) Starting at the top of your head, flex and then relax each part of your body.
3) Think of a place where you feel very relaxed and calm. Close your eyes and visualize being in that place.

Tips to Reduce Stress
Play sports
Read a good book
Listen to music
Hang out with friends
Go outside, take a walk

Reading Learning Targets

Understands grade level literary and informational text through the use of:

Fluency
- Adjusts reading rate for different texts and purposes.

Grade-level vocabulary
- Greek and Latin root words

Graphic Organizers
- Thinking Maps

Literary Elements
- Theme
- Plot
- Characters
- Setting
- Point of View
- Author's purpose and tone

Comprehension skills
- Main idea and supporting details
- Predicting
- Summarizing
- Comparing and Contrasting
- Cause and Effect
- Drawing Conclusions
- Inference

Literary Devices
- Imagery
- Exaggeration
- Dialogue
- Onomatopoeia
- Alliteration
- Rhythm
- Rhyme

Text Features
- Maps
- Charts
- Tables
- Graphs

Analyzes ideas and concepts between multiple texts. Written responses to reading include supporting details from the text.

WA State Learning Targets

Exploring Washington Prior to Statehood

Geography
- Identify the cultural groups who immigrated to Washington from other places in the world and the US prior to 1889 and explain why they came
- Analyze the changes Native Americans and early settlers made to their environment to meet their needs and wants
- Locate places of early settlement and identify the reasons people chose those places

Economics
- Explain the benefits and costs of trade between and among Native Americans and early settlers
- Describe the economic opportunities that encouraged people to immigrate to Washington

History
- Create a time line of key events up to 1889
- Describes the first people of Washington
- Describe how people traveled to and settled Washington
- Examine the challenges and the conflicts due to early settlement
- Explain how events in Washington's past influence the present

Living in Washington: Its Geography, Resources, and the Economy

Geography
- Compare and contrast the geographical regions of Washington
- Use maps, graphs, and charts to understand the patterns of economic activity and distribution of people in each of the regions
- Describe and compare the ways in which people satisfy their basic needs and wants through the production of goods and services in each of the regions of Washington
- Compare how people in each of the regions earn a living
- Explain how people have adapted to and been influence by their physical environment
- Explain why people move to or continue to live in Washington
- Examine how Washington's location provides cultural, political, and economic connectedness to the Pacific Rim

US History Learning Targets

US History: Colonization and Settlement

History
- Analyzes the religious, political, and economic motives of immigrants from different parts of Europe who came to the colonies
- Explain why and how African people were imported as slaves to the colonies
- Explain why there were conflicts among European nations over the colonies

Geography
- Use maps and globes to describe the movement of people from Europe and Africa to the colonies
- Compare and contrast the colonies in terms of geographic region, economic activity, and cultural and religious norms
- Explain why and how African people were enslaved and forcibly brought to the colonies
- Explain the consequences of European immigration for the native peoples of the Americas

Economics
- Examine how people made a living in the colonies
- Compare and contrast the economic regions in the Americas and explain how labor systems developed to support them
- Explain the role of entrepreneurship in the establishment of the colonies

US History: Independence

History
- Explain how critical events led to the Revolutionary War
- Create a time line of the critical events leading to the American Revolution
- Compare and contrast the perspectives of the Loyalists and Patriots

Civics
- Analyze origins of democratic ideals
- Examine the grievances and infractions imposed on the colo-

Science Learning Targets

Life Science
- Describe how an organism's ability to survive/adapt is affected by a change in an ecosystem.
- Students will understand causes and preventions of AIDS.
- Students will learn age appropriate developments and changes in human bodies.

Science Resources to use at home:
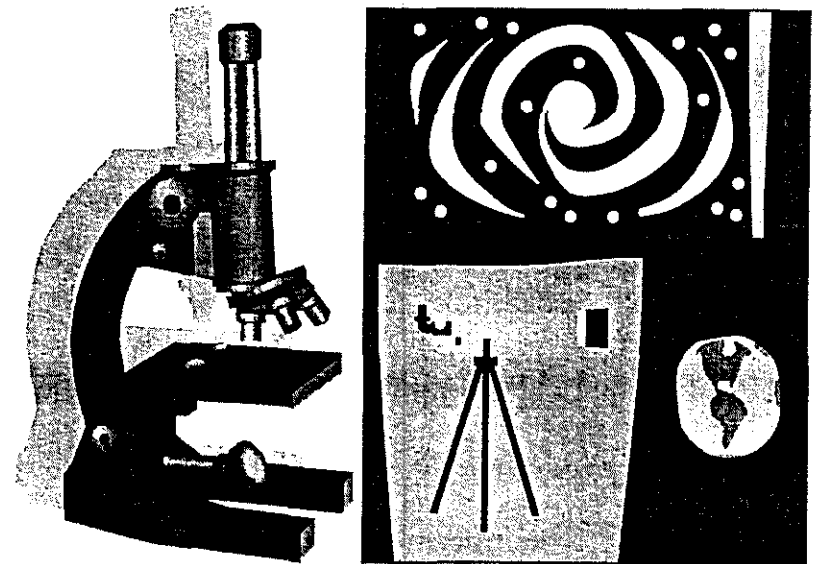*"How Mountains are Made" by Kathleen Zoehfeld*
"What are Food Chains and Webs?" by Bobbie KalMan
"The Pillbug Project" by Robin Burnett
"Kitchen Science" Mary Ling
Hike on local trails (Saddlerock)
Science Saurus-by Great Source

Economics
- Explain why different regions of Washington specialize in different economic activities
- Identify factors of production for various Washington industries
- Examine how trade is important to Washington state within the Pacific Rim
- Explain how competition affects economic activity in Washington
- Analyze the role of technology in businesses and industry in Washington
- Predict how the economy could change as a result of trade, resource use, climate, and/or labor
- Explain how use and depletion of natural resources affect our environment and economy

Being Citizens of Washington

Economics
- Analyze the role of government in responding to citizen's needs and wants
- Explain why taxation is necessary to pay for government

Civics
- Examine the rights and responsibilities of state citizenship
- Practice civic discussion/participation consistent with the ideals of citizens in a democratic society
- Identify actions citizens can take to influence public policy decisions
- Explain how public policies are used to address issues of public concern
- Explain how citizens advocate for the "common good" and individual rights
- Analyze and evaluates a public issue and suggests a solution
- Examine how state government is organized to ensure citizen involvement

Number Sense EALR 1.1
- Identify place value to the trillions and ten thousandths
- Convert between mixed numbers and fractions
- Compare and order decimals and fractions
- Solve problems related to primes, factors, multiples, and composites.
- Add, subtract, multiply, and divide whole numbers and decimals.
- Add and subtract fractions with like denominators

Measurement EALR 1.2
- Demonstrate how measurement units of capacity, weight, and length are organized in the metric system.
- Classify or sort angles as right, acute, or obtuse
- Measure and compute angles, area, and perimeter for rectangles and triangles.

Geometry EALR 1.3
- Identify, describe, compare, and sort: angles, polygons, circles and parallel and perpendicular lines.
- Identify whether a shape has been translated or reflected on a grid

Probability and Statistics EALR 1.4
- Express probability of single event on a scale of 0 to 1
- Calculate number of different combinations of different objects
- Find the range, mode, median, and mean of a set of data.
- Collect, organize, and interpret data
- Construct bar graph, circle graph, histogram, line graph.

Algebra EALR 1.5
- Extend number, shape, object patterns based on one operation (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division)
- Express relationships between quantities using $=, =, <, >, \leq, \geq$.
- Substitute symbol for numeric value in an expression
- Solve for missing value in equation involving division

How you can help your child with Math:
- *Play games that require keeping score, tracking time and /or money (ex. Battleship, Monopoly, Yahtzee, etc.).*
- *Measure and order a variety of objects (ex. by weight, height, perimeter, area).*
- *Practice rounding numbers in order to estimate.*

Music Learning Targets

1. Identifies and uses the following musical notation: sharp, flat, tie (notation)
2. Identifies and performs simple musical forms (i.e. theme & variation)
3. Aurally discriminates between major and minor
4. Sings in tune using proper posture, diction, breathing, and expression
5. Performs melodic and harmonic lines within an ensemble
6. Identifies specific attributes of art works of various artists, cultures, and times using arts vocabulary
7. Demonstrates audience conventions in a variety of arts settings and performances
8. Develops work using a creative process with instructor direction
   Applies a creative process in the arts:
   - **Conceptualizes** the context or purpose
   - **Gathers** information from diverse sources
   - **Develops** ideas and techniques
   - **Organizes** arts elements, forms, and/or principles into a creative work
   - **Reflects** for the purpose of elaboration and self evaluation
   - **Refines** work based on feedback
   - **Presents** work to others
9. Develops work using a performance process with instructor direction
   Applies a performance process in the arts:
   - **Identifies** audience and purpose
   - **Selects** artistic work (repertoire) to perform
   - **Analyzes** the structure and background of work
   - **Interprets** by developing a personal approach to the work
   - **Rehearses, adjusts,** and **refines** through evaluation and problem solving
   - **Presents** work for others
   - **Reflects** evaluates

High Literacy Expectations

Students read a minimum of 20 books per year:
- 4 textbooks (L.A., S.S., Science, Math)
- 12 in Language Arts (Students 2 + 1 Teacher Read Aloud Per Qtr.)
- 4 in Social Studies (1 per Qtr.)
Total = 20 books per year

Students perform a weekly writing task in all subjects.

Students write 2 published compositions ea. Month. (1 in L.A. and 1 in Soc. Studies)
**All teachers expect correct Non-negotiable in ALL WRITTEN WORK.**
All teachers encourage students to demonstrate their learning through Thinking Maps.

All teachers encourage students to use Step Up to Writing outlining.

All teachers encourage students to use Morphemic Analysis (defining words through roots, prefixes, suffixes)

How you can help your child with reading:
- *Read to and with your child everyday. Recognize and be proud of their success.*
- *As you read, ask questions like: What do you think will happened.*
- *Encourage your child to read for a different reasons-for fun, to learn something new, to follow directions-and to talk about the books they read.*
- *Be involved in helping your child*
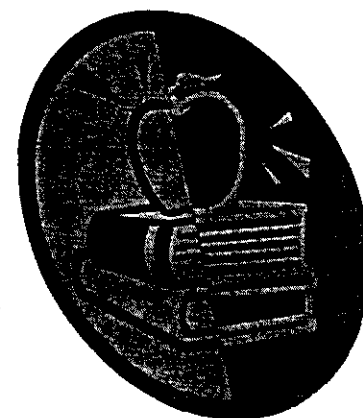
PE Learning Targets

- Perform movement combinations in rhythmic activities (i.e., line dances, square dances)
- Perform movement combinations in fundamental and complex skills
- Perform fundamental movement combinations in fundamental and complex skills
- Demonstrate mechanics of movement as applied to specific skills
- Perform skills to improve core strength
- Describe activities that lead to an active life
- Apply rules and etiquette in a variety of games
- Be aware of own personal space
- Understand space and plays a position in a modified game/activity
- Responds to a signal to hold or move equipment
- Examine a personal fitness assessment
- Set realistic goals based on current fitness measurement results and minimum health standards for age and gender
- Describe fitness results
- Describe anatomical and physiological functions
- Participate in activities that promote physical fitness in the five components of fitness
- Applies the dietary guidelines in making food choices
- Explains the importance of food choices and portion size moderation in a healthy diet
- Describe positive impacts of eating a variety of foods
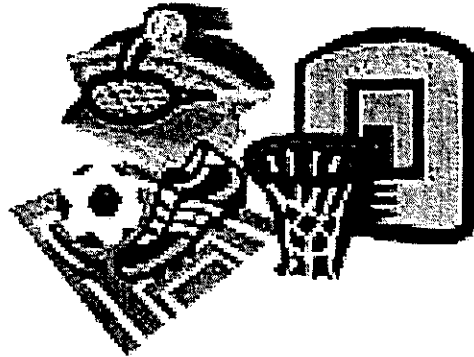
Writing Learning Targets

Content, Organization, and Style

Topics and Details: Maintains consistent focus on thesis and has selected relevant details.

Organization: Has a logical organizational pattern and conveys a sense of completeness and wholeness

Transitions: Provides transitions which clearly serve to connect ideas

Word Choice: Uses language effectively by exhibiting word choices that are engaging and appropriate for intended audience and purpose.

Sentence Fluency: Effectively uses sentences or phrases that are varied length and structure

Voice: Allows the reader to clearly sense the person behind the words.

Conventions

Usage: Consistently follows the rules of standard English

Spelling: Consistently follows the rules of standard English for spelling commonly used words.

Capitalization: Consistently follows the rules of standard English for capitalization.

Punctuation: Consistently follows the rules of standard English for punctuation.

Complete Sentences: Consistently exhibits the use of complete sentences except where purposeful phrases or clauses are used for effect

Paragraphs: Consistently indicates paragraphs

How you can help your child with writing:

- *Show that you enjoy and value your child's writing by praising their writing efforts.*
- *Help your child to write letters and notes, as well as modeling your own personal writing.*

Literacy Non-Negotiable

Capitalization
- Proper nouns
- First word of a sentence
- Days of the week
- Months
- First word in a quotation
- Languages, races, nationalities, and religions

Punctuation

- End of a sentence
- Periods after abbreviations
- Apostrophes in contractions and possessive nouns

Commas
- between day, month, year
- in a series
- in compound sentences
- after introductory phrase
- after transition words
- between city and state
- to separate an interruption

Grammar and Usage
- Subject/verb agreement
- Present, past, past participle verbs
- Consistent verb tense
- Consistent 1st & 3rd person
- Comparative / superlative adjectives

- Adverbs vs. adjectives
- No double negatives
- Use of I vs. me

Handwriting
Neat, legible handwriting is required on ALL written work.

Complete Answers
1. Restate the question in your answer
2. Answer all parts of the question
3. Use complete sentences

Target Words
- it's / its
- new / knew
- your / you're
- write / right
- their / they're / there
- then/than
- two / too / to

**Written work with non-negotiable mistakes will not be accepted.**
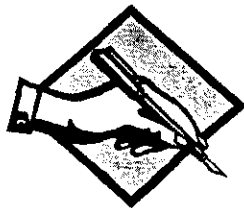
Music Learning Targets

10. Applies a responding process to an arts presentation with instructor direction
    Applies a responding process to an arts presentation:
    - **Engages** actively and purposefully
    - **Describes** what is seen and / or heard
    - **Analyzes** how the elements are arranged and organized
    - **Interprets** based on descriptive properties
    - **Evaluates** using supportive evidence and criteria
11. Expresses ideas and feelings through the arts
12. Creates and / or performs an artwork to communicate for a given purpose with instructor direction
13. Explains how personal aesthetic criteria is reflected in artwork
14. Describes skills, concepts and vocabulary common among arts disciplines
15. Identifies skills, concepts, and vocabulary common to the arts and other content areas
16. Analyzes how the arts impact personal and community choices
17. Identifies specific attributes of artworks that reflect culture
18. Describes career roles in the arts demonstrates arts skills used in the world of work
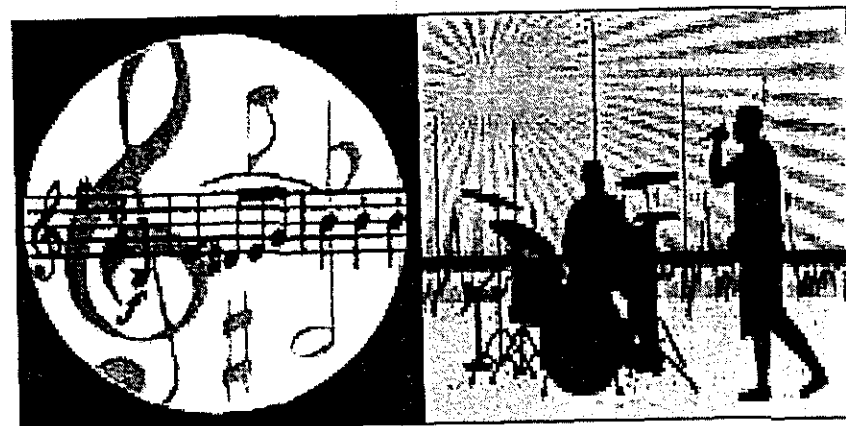
What to Expect in Intermediate School

People experience greater success when they know what to expect in intermediate school. Expect the following:

New teachers and Classmates

For many students going to intermediate school means going to a different, and often, larger school. For all students, intermediate school means new teachers, new classmates, and new friends.

Lots of New Things to Adjust to

Lockers...lunch periods...changing classes...study halls. These are just some of the things that intermediate school students need to get used to.

Extracurricular Activities and Athletic Programs

Intermediate schools have a variety of activities and athletic programs for students to become involved in.

More Independence and More Responsibility

Intermediate school students are expected to be mature and responsible enough to handle the additional freedoms they're given.

Greater Academic Pressure

The courses are more difficult, there's more homework, and students are expected to be able to do more work on their own.

More Social Events

There are more social activities (games, fun night, etc.) in intermediate school. Some students find that there are also more social pressures.

Many Changes

During intermediate school, students grow and change a great deal both physically and emotionally.

Intermediate School Information

School address_____

School phone number_____

School Web site_____

Principal's Name _____

Teacher's Name _____

Teacher's E-mail _____

Child's Home Room Number _____

Importance Dates and Information

_____

_____

_____

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