

Change Proposal

Project TEAM: Together Each Adds More

Terri Hrina-Treharn
Educational Policy, Politics and Change
Dr. Vergon / June 25, 2003

The Problem or Needs Statement

The mission at Rootstown Elementary School is to "provide a safe environment in which students have sufficient opportunity to learn how to take intelligent ethical action and to accomplish the goals of their educational programs". It is the last part of our mission statement that I would like to take a closer look at. What does it mean to accomplish the goals of their education programs? To me, this means striving for academic excellence. The school and state department of education like to think of this as whether or not our 4th graders are passing their proficiency tests. If this is true, then we need to focus our attention on the facts.

In the past years, 2000-01 and 2001-02, we have been at a "stand still" with our scores. Both school report cards indicate that we are stuck in a state of "continuous improvement". A problem we are facing at the elementary building is that our scores are consistently between approximately 54-64% (with the exception of the Writing section which is at 76.1% as of the 01-02 school year). The state standard is 75% in each area: Citizenship, Mathematics, Reading, Writing, and Science. We need to raise our scores! If you look at a sampling of other districts in our county, you will notice a significant increase in their scores compared to ours.

Distirict	Writing	Reading	Mathematics	Citizenship	Science
Rootstown	76	60	58	54	55
Ravenna	81	62	78	80	76
Garfield	90	70	63	72	68
Field	90	73	73	75	82

Why is it that places like Ravenna are scoring 20% higher than us in Math and 26% higher in Citizenship? What's contributing to our low scores? When I look at our district's scores for grades 4, 6, 9 and 12, I notice that in 4th grade we're only meeting 1 of the 5 indicators, yet in 12th grade we're meeting ALL but 1 of the indicators. What are they doing differently in the upper grades that we may need to model down at the elementary level?

Continous Improvement Chart here

In researching to find out what contributes to low proficiency scores, or as Ginger Reynold's calls it "an achievement gap" (NCREL, 2002), I have come across the following explanations:

*socioeconomic backgrounds
*teacher quality

*dollars spent per pupil
*curriculum not aligned

It is the last two that I would like to spend some time talking about. What is "teacher quality"? Is this how "good" a teacher is or how we can best maximize their qualities and expertise? We look at the course load of an elementary teacher and wonder how he/she is able to manage. This is someone that has to plan and teach SIX different subjects a day: math, reading, language, spelling, science, and social studies. How can one become knowledgeable in so many areas? Are we trying to spread our teachers too thin? I look at what the middle and high school teachers are doing and the aren't planning for and teaching six different subject areas. They usually work in "teams" or departments and focus in on one or two areas versus six. They allow their teachers to "specialize" in areas so they can take pride in their subject-matter discipline and can concentrate on preparing a limited number of "outstanding" lessons versus a large number of "okay" lessons. This way they can really hone in on that subject and become more of an expert in it.

I found a small, rural community, as is ours, located in Northport, Michigan that talks about their families wanting their children to have a "sounder education, not necessarily broader, but deeper" (NCREL, 1998). This is a school where they have to give a 4th and 7th grade state assessment, much like out 4th and 6th graders take the proficiency tests. Approximately 92.9% of their students attained satisfactory scores compared to the state average of 51.4% in math. In reading, 76.8% attained satisfactory scores contrasted with only 40.4% statewide. So what's their secret you ask, they emphasize on "vigorous teacher collegiality, collaboration, and sustained, purposeful professional dialogue, which actively combats teacher isolation and infrequent conversation about classroom practice..." (NCREL 1998). To do this they created middle school "teams" and adopted more of a block scheduling approach.

The other explanation for low proficiency scores was curriculum not being aligned with state standards. Going back to Reynold's, in her article "Bridging the Great Divide: Broadening Perspectives on Closing the Achievement Gaps", she talks about a "need for clear and public standards to guide teachers& on what is expected from students at various benchmarks" (NCREL, 2002). Not only do our assessments need to be aligned with the standards, but the curriculum does too. Many schools solve this by creating "curriculum maps" that plot out for their teachers what standards they will be teaching at various times during the school year.

Once we have our curriculum aligned with the standards and the standards with the tests, and we've maximized the talents and qualities of our teachers, we won't have to worry too much about low having low proficiency scores. These are the kinds of things the schools with high scores are doing to get those results. Now am I saying that we are going to move into the "excellent" rating on our report card, no, but we need to remember that effective change doesn't happen over night. Change takes time! If we can move into the "effective" rating within the next year or two and work towards "excellent", then we're on our way to solving our problem.

Objectives/Intended Outcomes

A. GOAL: Increase 4th grade proficiency scores through staff specialization and teaming.

- OBJECTIVES:
1. To implement team teaching at of the start of the 2003-04 school year, as demonstrated in teacher lesson plans and evaluations, throughout the school year.
 2. To increase our 4th grade proficiency results by 2.5% on each section as demonstrated on the March 2004 administration of the Ohio Fourth Grade Proficiency Test.

B. GOAL: Increase 4th grade proficiency scores through curriculum mapping.

- OBJECTIVE:
3. To construct curriculum maps for each content area as demonstrated in teacher lesson plans and the district's course of study by the start of the 2003-04 school year.

Description of the Innovation/Intervention with Supporting Research

As the Goals suggest, this innovation has two principal components: Teaming and Curricular mapping. Each of these facets of the innovation are described next.

Teaming

Project TEAM: Together Each Adds More, the title of my change proposal, suggests that two heads are better than one. This is one of the reasons why I have chosen "team teaching" in 4th grade as part of my innovation. Teams provide the opportunity for each other to share concerns with their partner. They are better able to handle dealing with the daily realities of the classroom too. If you were having a problem with a student before, being a self-contained teacher, you would either blame yourself or the student. Now you have someone to confer with to deal with these kinds of issues.

Let's first begin by looking at the definition of a "team". According to Katzenbach and Smith, a team is "a small group of people with complimentary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable" (<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu>). The key elements of this definition include the following:

- | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| *small group | *performance goals |
| *complimentary skills | *approach |
| *common purpose | *mutual accountability |

Teams comprised of four or five are simply too large, because reaching consensus on changes is difficult with so many diverse personalities. Speaking of personalities, too often

teachers think that "getting along" is the most important feature of a team (Katzenbach and Smith). Although it's true that they must work together, being friends isn't the key issue here. It's a matter of bringing together a mix of personalities, skills, and understandings that are going to allow students to be more accepting of different opinions. Moving down the list, having a common purpose is the most important part of the definition. For a real team to form, there must be a purpose that is characteristic and specific to the group in order to accomplish the goals they've set out, and identifying goals is crucial. You need to set goals at various levels and use them to check on your progress.

Too often, teams simply come together on the assumption that everyone present will not only relate effectively, but they'll do it the right way--my way. Then when a group member does something differently, like disagreeing openly with another person's ideas, one member is offended and the team starts to break down (Katzenbach and Smith). Effective teams are the ones that consciously come together and agree how to do business; they learn to talk about the way they act. Finally, mutual accountability is something quite uncomfortable for the team members if it isn't done the right way. There's no easy way to point out that someone isn't doing his/her job, but using a chart can make it easier. It serves as a record of what all members agreed to do and as a reminder of what the team is trying to accomplish, academic excellence, thus raising proficiency scores. The chart would include what must be done, who is going to do it, and when it's going to get done.

When asking teachers what makes a team grow strong, they cited two characteristics they felt work for the benefit of students. The first was humor, to keep the team positive and on track. The second characteristic was not holding grudges against team members. They went on to comment "you should laugh together, eat together, and make copies together at least twice a week" (Cromwell, Education World, 2002).

Your team is going to include a variety of different teaching styles and teachers need to treat each other with a lot of respect and honesty. An effective team is one that can identify both their strengths and weaknesses.

To be more specific, the team teaching I'm referring to would include two teachers that would each have their own homeroom class but would then switch for certain content areas in blocks of time. A proposed schedule might look something like this:

Possible Schedule

Period	Teacher A	Teacher B
8:35-9:20AM	Social Studies (A)	Science (B)
9:20-10:20AM	Math (A)	Language Arts/Spelling (B)
10:20-11:20AM	Math (B)	Language Arts/Spelling (A)
11:25-12:15PM	LUNCH/RECESS	LUNCH/RECESS
12:20-1:05PM	Social Studies (B)	Science (A)
1:10-1:50PM	***SPECIAL (Could include: gym, music, library, etc.)	
1:55-2:45PM	Reading (A)	Reading (B)

(*NOTE: A and B designate which class the teacher has. Ex. Teacher A starts out with his/her own class for Social Studies and Math and then the students switch and he/she has class B students for Math)

(***While students are at their Special, teachers use this time to plan together.)

During planning time, teachers will discuss things such as discipline issues, parental concerns, scheduling of homework, tests, and possible conflicts because of assemblies, just to name a few. They will have this time to collaborate on planning various activities that will integrate the topics they are teaching as well. Continuously monitoring that they are on track with the curriculum mapping and discussing any issues that arise in terms of teaming together. Once a month they will also meet with the other team in the grade level to monitor, share, and collaborate.

Team teaching is becoming more and more prevalent with approximately 77% of middle schools around the United States using it. (It was defined that middle schools could include any grades between 4-8) (Cromwell). I'm glad to say that I can share our 4th grade team is now a part of that 77%. This past school year we have implemented team teaching at the 4th grade level in hopes to improve proficiency scores and we have had great success with it. Our proficiency scores have gone up considerably!

4th Grade Proficiency Scores (2001-02, 2002-03)

Citizenship		Mathematics Reading				Writing		Science	
01-02	02-03	01-02	02-03	01-02	02-03	01-02	02-03	01-02	02-03
54%	69%	58.4%	66%	60.2%	76%	76.1%	72%	54.9%	0%

Team teaching has advantages for both teachers and students:

Advantages for Teachers

- *Provides supportive environment
- *Aids in overcoming academic isolation
- *Decreases the amount of planning
- *Increases the expertise in specific teaching areas

Advantages for Students

- *May provide educational benefits such as increased level of understanding
- *Greater variety of learning styles are met
- *Opens eyes to accepting more than one point of view

Curriculum Mapping

The second part of my innovation is curriculum mapping. Mapping out the curriculum means to align your district's course of study with the state standards. You begin by taking the state standards and deciding when you should cover the various topics. For example, we know in 4th grade that measurement is something that is always on the Ohio 4th Grade Proficiency, so we would want to teach that concept before March when the test is administered. Therefore, you would want to structure it so that topics that only have one question, if any, are taught after the proficiency, mid-March through June. This is actually another benefit to team teaching. As a 4th grade teacher it is difficult to remember, or time-consuming to go and familiarize yourself with each of the five core areas and map out what questions are on the test. If you are only teaching three subject areas instead of six, it is much easier to do. This is why curriculums that are not aligned tend to contribute to low proficiency scores. Teachers may be teaching the standards, but at the wrong times throughout the year. If you're spending a lot of time teaching something that isn't even going to be on the proficiency test before March, you're wasting valuable time not getting something else in that's going to be on the test!

Implementation Plan

The task of implementing my innovation of team teaching and curriculum alignment will take place initially over a period of approximately one year. This will include the time that I will present the idea to my staff, all the way up to the end of the following school year in which we will meet to collaborate, monitor, evaluate, and plan for the following year. Throughout the actual school year (2003-04), teacher teams will meet daily during their planning periods to work together as a team. They will also meet once a month, during that time, with the other teacher team in their grade level. Teachers can use these times to make sure they are following the curriculum maps that have been put into place to ensure that topics, which will appear on the March proficiency, are being covered. Early on in the year they will be administering a practice proficiency test to establish the strengths and weaknesses of the students to better help them plan out their lessons. This is something else that will benefit from two heads instead of one. The following is a timeline showing the tasks to be implemented, who will be responsible, and the time period in which they will occur.

-Administer Ohio 4th Grade Prof. Tests	-4th grade teachers	March 04
-Staff visitations to other schools that use team teaching	-4th grade teachers, Curriculum director	Early Apr 04
-Grade level meeting to discuss school visitations	-4th grade teachers, principal, Curriculum director	Late April 04
-Review curriculum maps are being followed (2nd semester)	-4th grade teachers, Curriculum director, principal	May 04
-Review proficiency results	-4th grade teachers, Curriculum director, principal	Late May 04
-Monitor and review innovation success through grade level meetings with principal and at the end of the year staff meeting	-4th grade teachers, Curriculum director, principal	Early June 04

Plan for Monitoring and Evaluating the Intervention

To evaluate Project TEAM: Together Each Adds More, there will be various indicators to look at. As an administrator, I would start by looking at teacher lesson plans and ask to be invited to teacher meetings once every two weeks in the beginning, and then just once every month. This will allow me to see whether or not team teaching is actually going on and also to check that teachers are on track with the curriculum maps. To indicate that team teaching is evident in their lesson plans, I will need to look at what areas they are planning for in comparison to what areas each of them told me they agreed to teach back when they decided on their teacher teams. In meeting with our Curriculum director, earlier in the year, I can obtain a copy of the curriculum maps to have as a reference. Therefore, I can also see by viewing their plans if they are planning for the topics that they should be during each month. Then, in late May, I can use the proficiency results to see whether or not we have made our 2.5% gain in each of the five sections.

Considering that my teachers play a very important role in the implementation and ongoing tasks, it is also pivotal that they take part in monitoring and evaluating a variety of things too. They are going to be responsible and accountable for having their meetings to closely monitor how effective their schedules and planning times are, in addition to how well the students are responding to this new approach of instruction. I will be making sure that these meetings are actually occurring by my attendance at them that I spoke of earlier. Teachers are going to have to keep track of when they are finishing the instruction of certain topics versus when the curriculum maps say they should be completing them. It is quite evident that the

different make up of the different classes is going to require some teachers to spend more time than allotted on certain topics, or perhaps be able to finish earlier than anticipated. There will need to be a lot of communication in this area so that modifications can be made in the future. This will help them to brainstorm and problem solve so that they're not dealing with the same problems again next year. Having this information will also be significant to bring to the semester meetings that will review if the teachers are keeping up with the curriculum maps.

Administering the practice proficiency tests throughout September and October will provide the basis of discussions at the follow-up meeting for all of us to look at and discuss (teachers, principal, and curriculum director). Teachers are going to need to evaluate how much their students already know and what concepts they're really going to need to spend a lot of time on. This may in turn cause us to have to switch some of the topics around on the curriculum maps. By doing so, it should prove to be effective on the end result, the proficiency tests. Strategic planning, monitoring, and evaluating are key when it comes to implementing change.

Finally, meeting with the teachers after their school visitations will really help to evaluate and plan for the following school year. Going at this point in the year versus the beginning, I think, will be more beneficial because they've already had a chance to really "get their feet wet" with the whole idea of team teaching. Now that they've been doing it they will have valid questions or issues that they would like to see how other schools are handling or have handled. They can delve into the whole idea of networking with teachers from the other schools and set up support systems in which each party can benefit. Nothing is better than to be able to offer a good idea in return for one!

Statement of Resources Necessary to Implement the Innovation/Intervention

Curriculum Mapping

*Teacher stipend for attending/participating in the development of curriculum maps over the summer

- MATH
2 teachers x \$100.00 stipend = \$200.00
- SCIENCE
2 teachers x \$100.00 stipend = \$200.00
- SOCIAL STUDIES
2 teachers x \$100.00 stipend = \$200.00

*Refreshments/Lunch provided
4 people per day x 3 days, @ \$10.00 per day = \$120.00
(2 teachers, principal, and Curriculum director)

Staff Development

*Teacher stipend for August training
4 teachers x \$100.00 = \$400.00

*External consultant
1 consultant x \$1500.00 = \$1500.00

*Refreshments/Lunch provided
7 people x \$10.00 = \$70.00
(4 teachers, consultant, principal, Curriculum director)

*External consultant for follow-up training in December
1 consultant x \$1500.00 = \$1500.00

*Substitutes for 4 teachers
4 substitutes for 1 day, @ the daily rate of \$75.00 per day = \$300.00

*Refreshments/Lunch provided
7 people x \$10.00 = \$70.00

Staff Visitation

*Substitutes for 4 teachers
4 substitutes for 1 day, @ the daily rate of \$75.00 per day = \$300.00

The total budget for Project TEAM: Together Each Adds More = \$4,860.000

Bibliography

Cromwell, S. (2002). "Team Teaching: Teaming Teachers Offer Tips"
Retrieved from <http://www.educationworld.com/admin/admin290.shtml>

Reynolds, G. (2002). "Bridging the Great Divide: Broadening Perspectives on Closing the Achievement Gaps" Retrieved from www.ncrel.org/policy/pubs/pdfs/bridging.pdf

<http://www.ncrel.org/cscd/pubs/lead52/52northp.htm>

www.ode.state.oh.us/reportcard

<http://jan.ucc.nau.edu/~dlk/purpose.html>

Introduction of Change to Staff

Project TEAM: Together Each Adds More

Here at Rootstown Elementary we will be implementing both a team teaching approach to instruction in 4th grade, as well as aligning our curriculum with the state standards through the use of curriculum mapping. Before I go on to define this innovation, let's take a look at the need.

We're all working so hard but the proficiency results just keep coming back the same continuous improvement, continuous improvement, continuous improvement. I know we are better than this and WILL prove it! You ARE great teachers and I appreciate your hard work, effort, and drive to always become better. We NEED to raise our proficiency scores and we're going to ACHIEVE it.

Through the use of team teaching, you will be able to work closely with another teacher to plan, collaborate, share ideas, and have a support system. I want YOU to have just as big a part, if not bigger, than I do in this journey. I want YOU to take charge of devising whom you will team with and what subjects each of you will be teaching. I have devised some schedules that will allow you to have common planning times to work closely together with one another, as communication will be a KEY FACTOR!

We will begin by aligning our curriculum before the start of the upcoming year. I am offering stipends for you to participate in this since it will ultimately affect you. I will also be providing staff development for you before the start of the school year, as well as a follow-up during the year. You will be given time off in the spring to visit other schools that use this