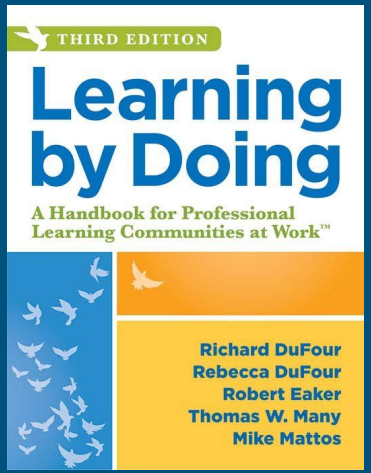
Learning by Doing

A Handbook for Professional Learning Communities at Work



Chapters 5 & 6 Book Study

October 23, 2020

Chapter 5: Establishing a Focus on Learning

- Teams must work collaboratively to clarify the question, *"What is it we want our students to learn?"*
- Teams are held accountable for establishing a guaranteed and viable curriculum.
  - This means that we give students access to the same essential learning outcomes regardless of who is teaching the class
  - This DOESN'T mean that….
    - Teachers must adhere to lockstep pacing where members are teaching from the same page on the same day.
    - Teachers must use the same instructional strategies.
- Instead, it means that…
  - During a unit presented within a specific window of time established by the team, each team member will work to ensure every student acquires the knowledge and skills the team has agreed are the most essential for that unit.

Establishing a Guaranteed & Viable Curriculum

- Establishing a guaranteed and viable curriculum requires that teachers engage in process of collective inquiry. This includes the following six steps:
  a. Collectively study the standards using a variety of internal and external resources.
  b. Read consensus on the highest priority standards by differentiating standards that are “nice to know” from those that all students “must know.”
  c. Clarify how the highest priority standards are translated into the specific knowledge, skills, and dispositions that all students must demonstrate.
  d. Establish what proficiency for each standard or essential learning looks like.
  e. Establish common pacing guides and agreed-on assessment schedules.
  f. Commit to one another that they will actually teach that agreed-on curriculum.

Prioritized Standards

- State standards are far too many to learn in a school year.
- We must determine which of the standards are essential from those that are nice to know.
- Essential standards do not represent all that teachers teach. They represent the *minimum* a student must learn to reach high levels of learning. They serve to establish the focus for assessing student learning and implementing interventions when students do not learn.

**The process of prioritizing standards encourages us to embrace more in-depth instruction by reducing the pressure to simply *cover the material*.

Examining the Standards

- Strategy:
  - Underline the teachable concepts (important nouns and noun phrases)
  - Capitalize the skills (verbs) students are to demonstrate

- Examples:
  - RI.6.6: DETERMINE an author's point of view or purpose in a text and EXPLAIN how it is conveyed.
  - 2.NBT.9: EXPLAIN WHY addition and subtraction strategies work, USING place value and the properties of operations.

Curriculum

- Keep, Drop, Create - Teachers analyze the intended versus the implemented curriculum.
- Assists us in discovering curriculum gaps and topics that must be addressed in upcoming units. Helps teams create a stop-doing list of topics that are not essential.

- Ties back to: ***What must our students know and be able to do as a result of this unit we are about to teach?***

Learning Targets

- Learning Targets - The desired outcome of an individual lesson.
- Learning targets tightly align to the standards, representing the learning students need to reflect the essence of the standards.
- Creating learning targets is a powerful process of unwrapping standards. Teams come to understand what each standard requires that teachers should teach and students should learn.
- The goal of unwrapping the standards is to get the “essence” of each standard.

“I Can” Statements

- Learning targets should be translated into student-friendly statements called “I can” statements.
- “I can” statements…
  - Help students understand their progress toward mastery of the standard.
  - Clarify for students what students are learning, what they should know and be able to do
  - Enable students to monitor and assume major responsibility for their own learning
  - Help teams develop appropriate formats for formative and summative assessments
  - Provide parents with a clear explanation of what their child is expected to be able to know and do.

Wiki Teacher

Unwrapped Standards

Reading Literature (RL)

RL.3.(1-3) Key Ideas and Details

RL.3.1 - Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

RL.3.2 - Recount stories, including fables, folktales, and myths from diverse cultures; determine the central message, lesson, or moral and explain how it is conveyed through key details in the text.

RL.3.3 - Describe characters in a story (e.g., their traits, motivations, or feelings) and explain how their actions contribute to the sequence of events.

RL.3.(4-6) Craft and Structure

RL.3.4 - Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language.

RL.3.5 - Refer to parts of stories, dramas, and poems when writing or speaking about a text, using terms such as chapter, scene, and stanza; describe how each successive part builds on earlier sections.

RL.3.6 - Distinguish their own point of view from that of the narrator or those of the characters.

Proficiency

- Clarifying standards through the lens of student work leads teams through a natural progression of questions:
  - What is it we want our students to learn?
  - What is the evidence we expect students to generate in order to demonstrate proficiency?
  - What would this standard, if mastered, look like in terms of student work?
  - What will our assessments look like in order to gather the appropriate evidence?

Proficiency Scales

Pacing

- Once teams have 1) prioritized and unwrapped standards, 2) translated learning targets into “I Can” statements, and 3) reached consensus on what proficiency looks like, they can turn their attention to *pacing*.
- The pacing of a guaranteed and viable curriculum concentrates on designing an instructional sequence for the *highest priority standards*.
- Our focus should be on *teaching*, not simply covering the curriculum.
- The best way for us to provide input into pacing curriculum is by using the results of our common formative assessments. As a team, determine what percentage of students achieving mastery on a common assessment is considered proficient.

Final Thoughts

- Implementing a guaranteed and viable curriculum is a process, not an event.
- The fundamental purpose of school is *learning*, not teaching.
- *When teachers work together to establish clarity regarding the knowledge, skills, and dispositions all students are to acquire as a result of each course, grade level, and unit of instruction, schools take a significant step forward on their PLC journey. When those same teachers establish frequent common formative assessments that provide timely feedback on each student's proficiency, their schools advance even further, because these assessments help identify students who are experiencing difficulty in their learning.*

BREAK

Chapter 6: Creating Team-Developed Common Formative Assessments

- Team-developed common formative assessments serve two important purposes:
    1. Better meet individual student's needs through timely and targeted intervention or extension
    2. Help teachers improve their individual and collective teaching practice
- Team-developed common formative assessments are the lynchpin of the PLC process and, when used properly, the key to improving both student and adult learning.
- Using a common assessment means students who are in the same curriculum and are expected to acquire the same knowledge, skills, and dispositions will be assessed using the same instrument or process, at the same time, or within a very narrow window of time.

Team-Developed Common Formative Assessments

- Team-developed common formative assessments help answer the second critical question of PLCs: *How do we know our students are learning?*
- Team members will use the evidence of student learning from their common formative assessments to inform their individual and collective practice in 4 ways:
    1. To inform each teacher of their individual students who need ***intervention*** because they are struggling to learn or who need ***enrichment*** because they are already proficient.
    2. To inform students of the next steps the must take in their learning.
    3. To inform each member of the team of his or her *individual strengths and weaknesses in teaching particular skills* so each member can provide or solicit help from colleagues on the team.
    4. To inform the team of areas where many students are struggling so that the team can develop and implement better strategies for teaching those areas.

Formative VS. Summative

- Summative assessment is an assessment ***of*** learning.
- Formative assessment is an assessment ***for*** learning.
- Formative assessment can be defined as “frequent, interactive assessments of students’ progress and understanding to identify learning needs and adjust teaching appropriately.”
- Results from formative assessments help us make decisions about the next steps in instruction.
- A summative assessment gives the student the opportunity to prove what he or she has learned by a certain deadline.
- A formative assessment gives the student the opportunity to improve on his or her learning because it informs both the teacher and student as to appropriate next steps in the learning process.

Deeper Learning

- If educators are to help students acquire deeper knowledge and skills, they must create assessments that provide timely information on each student's proficiency in these key areas of learning.
- Teachers must engage in collective inquiry regarding how to monitor deeper learning for their students.
  - DOK 1: Recall of a fact, term, concept, or procedure - basic comprehension
  - DOK 2: Application of concepts and procedures involving some mental processing
  - DOK 3: Applications requiring abstract thinking, reasoning, or more complex inferences
  - DOK 4: Extended analysis or investigation that requires synthesis and analysis across multiple contexts

Final Thoughts

- Team-developed common formative assessments should be used to determine which students need intervention/enrichment AND also as powerful tools for informing and improving teacher practice.
- Teams should return to the results of their analysis when they prepare to teach the same unit the following year.
- If all students are expected to demonstrate the same knowledge and skills regardless of the teacher to whom they are assigned, it only makes sense that teachers would work together to assess student learning.
- Common assessments in the PLC context are developed collaboratively in grade-level and departmental teams and incorporate each team's collective wisdom (professional knowledge and experience) in determining the selection, design, and administration of those assessments.

Next Meeting

TBD

Chapters: 7 & 8