

Principal & Director Reports

August 2012

AC. Houghton Elementary

Reflection on Assessment Institute

According to Rick Stiggins, we have come to a point in American education when we must change our assessment beliefs and act accordingly, or we must abandon hope that all students will meet standards or that the ever present achievement gap will close. The troubling fact is that, if all students don't meet standards—that is, if the gap doesn't close between those who meet and don't meet those standards—our society will be unable to continue to evolve productively in either a social or an economic sense.

Yet, assessment over the past has done as much to increase the gap as it has to narrow it. This must change now and it can. As it turns out, assessment may be the most powerful tool available to us for ensuring student mastery of essential standards, but to do this seven specific assessment actions must be taken.

We must:

1. Balance our assessments to meet the information needs of all instructional decision makers
2. Continue to refine our academic achievement standards
3. Assure the quality of classroom assessments
This is very important because "Students get make data-based instructional decisions First!"
4. Turn the learners into assessors during their learning
5. Rethink our feedback strategies
6. Build on learner success as the universal motivator
A student's emotional reaction to results will determine what the student does in response.
7. Assure assessment literacy throughout our assessment systems
I know this is an area of improvement for me and my staff.

Heppner Elementary & Heppner High School

While reflecting on the 2012 Oregon Summer Assessment Institute in Eugene, I felt that there were some very pertinent Assessment, Common Core State Standard and Data ideas that I can use and implement in our Heppner Schools. The general sessions were very worthwhile and I also attended a couple of breakout sessions that were informative and interesting as well.

In addition to the presentations and key note speakers I believe an even greater asset that I gained from this conference was the communication and networking with our district administrative team. This relationship building is essential because it allows us to brainstorm and strategically plan for the upcoming year while bouncing ideas off of each other and TEAM Building at the same time. I came away from the conference with ideas from three different sessions that will be useful to me in the near future.

1. Educational shift and new initiatives were reoccurring themes at the conference and it didn't take long to figure out that many districts throughout the state are dealing with the same concerns that we are here in Morrow County. The good that is coming from many of the new initiatives and mandates is that conversations and strategies are now being implemented for real change with focus on both learning and teaching.

2. Data to drive instruction is being used more now than ever to derive useful trend patterns from assessments to improve teaching and learning. This is important because as more teachers in a building become data driven and strategically look at their assessment data, the results for improved instruction and student learning are greatly enhanced.
3. CCSS will cause a more concentrated effort on combining writing as an essential skill associated with learning across the curriculum while narrowing our focus to the CCSS which will be more rigorous than the current OAKS system.

I found the conference to be a worthwhile experience and found real value in the networking which took place amongst our MCSD Administrative Team. The relationship building and strategic planning that took place will serve our district well as we prepare to begin another new school year in Morrow County.

Irrigon Elementary School

At the summer assessment institute in Eugene, I had the fortune of attending one of the breakout sessions by Dr. Dylan Wiliam. The session, titled "Formative Assessment: what it is and what it isn't" focused on how teachers can learn what their students have learned and what to do with that information once they had it.

The topic of assessment in education has found its way to the forefront, and for good reason. Assessing student learning is the only way the public knows how its schools are performing. It is also how teachers know if they can move to the next lesson or if they have to go back and work with their students more on a topic they are teaching.

The problem is that few teachers have been well-trained in the art and science of assessing students, and it's a lot more than simply asking a question and waiting for a response. It's about building assessments and using them as measurement tools - making sure that we measure what we intend to measure and then do something with the results that positively impacts student learning.

The best takeaway from the session for me was this: When it comes to student learning, the students *emotional response* to the results of the assessment are all that really matters. It made sense as I started to process it - if a student does poorly on an essay, a single red F makes the student feel like a failure - why try? A "33/60" with some constructive comments on the other hand may dishearten the student, but they will at least feel like they know how to do better in the future.

He also spoke of the importance of formative assessments - the term comes from the idea that formative assessments help "form" the students learning by providing the feedback students need to know if they are getting the material from their classes. Frequent embedded formative assessments help guide both the teacher and the students in a classroom and help keep the learning moving forward. Unfortunately, we rely too heavily on summative assessment, the assessments designed to be given at the end of a unit to determine what students learned from the unit or course. They are not designed to provide any more feedback than a grade, and in a way, serve to rank or compare the students in a class - although this serves an important purpose, it doesn't help students learn the way formative assessments do.

Irrigon High School

I really appreciated the opportunity to attend the professional development conference hosted by COSA last week. For me, I found the keynote address and breakout session from John Woodward to be the most beneficial. In his keynote address, he discussed an on-line practice guide for teachers to improve mathematical problem solving in grades four through eight. The guide provided practical research-based recommendations for educators to help them address the everyday challenges they face in their classroom. Additionally, the guide provided solid step by step process for implementation of each recommendation as well as a rating system of the supporting research and solutions for the common hurdles teachers might encounter along the way.

Mr. Woodward's breakout session also focused on mathematics learning. In it he demonstrated the need for teachers to move student learning beyond just the procedures on how to solve problems towards an overall better understanding of the subject matter. He accomplished this by presenting numerous visual and less traditional approaches to teaching mathematical concepts.

In short, both sessions focused on improving mathematical success through somewhat similar approaches. The first through better problem solving strategies and second by developing a deeper understanding of the mathematical concepts by moving beyond the lower level of Bloom's hierarchy of learning. Both approaches lend themselves greatly towards meeting the direction set by the common core standards.

Riverside High School

I am glad to announce that we are off to a good start at Riverside jr/sr high school. Summer school is underway and students are thriving. Second session of summer school runs from August 1-17. We currently offer both support classes and enhancement classes for students needing support and for those that want to stay ahead as they plan for success for the 2012-13 school year.

This is peak time for the office staff as we plan for the upcoming year. Schedules, registration and welcome back events are being fine-tuned for a smooth execution and delivery of services. We are excited to begin another great year. I am very proud of our front office, staff and our students.

The MCSD provided the administrative team the opportunity to attend a COSA Conference in Eugene Oregon August 1-3. There was a plethora of offerings for administrators to fine-tune knowledge as we focus on Common Core State Standards and to look at how our school is interacting and meandering through the transition. We learned our work in Morrow Co. is on track with others state wide.

Keynote throughout the conference:

- Dylan William – Math and Assessment
- Dr. Rick Stiggins – Assessment Literacy
- Dr. John Woodward – Math Focus
- Tony Alpert-Smarter Balance
- Amiee Guidera – Accessibility and use of education data

One interesting area of focus at the conference was assessment literacy, or how we look at assessments to adjust and drive our instruction. I re-learned that we have to be deliberate on how we design assessment for learning and what we are really wanting to measure. In this case, we certainly want to pin point the standards making sure students are not only familiar but proficient.

There were strong key note speakers. One of which stood out to me (Dr. Rick Stiggins) well known for supporting school leaders understand of how to use the assessment process and its results to benefit, not just monitor, student learning. One interesting view point was his recommendation of using student-involved assessments to maximize student confidence, motivation and learning. I will be trying this during our PLC time at Riverside. He states that assessment literacy is a must for classroom assessors, more specifically teachers, support staff and Administrators. Breaking down data and being able to move ahead with the results in a laser like fashion is paramount.

We also had opportunities to establish a network with other local and state administrators. This afforded our team the opportunity to compare in juxtaposition our current practices with colleagues. I'm happy to report that we are on pace.

Another important aspect of the conference was that our Morrow Co. team of administrators were able to discuss strategies and ideas for the coming year centered around common core. Overall, the conference was a great start for the team. There were lots of relevant presentations and speakers that gave us the reassurance and the confidence that we are headed in the right direction.

Sam Boardman Elementary School

Thank you Dirk and George, and the Morrow County School District for allowing me the opportunity to attend COSA's Oregon Summer Assessment Institute. It is truly a wonderful opportunity to be able to sit at the feet of such great thinkers!

My two favorite keynote speakers:

Dylan William, *Director of Learning and Teaching Research Center at the Educational Testing Service* Mr. William highlighted a world perspective where other countries are outperforming the US, where we compete globally for jobs, and where machines have already replaced many of the manufacturing and clerical aspects. He concluded with an example of a popular job today, writing apps for iphones, that wasn't even a concept when those kids were in high school. My take-away is how educators/schools have had a narrow focus on the diploma as the outcome. The outcome for education is to prepare students for a future that is uncertain and yet to be discovered. I can better understand the Waiver's emphasis on post diploma outcomes.

Rick Stiggins, *Author, professor, research and development for ACT and the Northwest Regional Lab* Mr. Stiggins highlighted the need for each person in education to be assessment literate in order to assess and judge authentic learning. He presented five foundational ideas in assessments and connected these to the unfair attempt to use assessments in teacher evaluations.

He left us with a political “what if” in contrast. What if teachers were responsible to their supervisors and districts for student learning and they brought their portfolio of evidence, some of which might be state assessment. My take-away is what an interesting twist in logic...that certainly would “take the camera out of the hallway, where students would need to be accountable for their own behavior” so to speak. Smarter Balance is a few years out and has one year end test. Smarter Balance’s “formative assessments” are more like teacher supports than students assessments of learning. Teachers are already looking at formative assessments to better understand student learning along the way. This is a perfect time to introduce Exam View!

My two favorite breakout sessions:

Kevin Feldman, *Author and Director of Reading and Intervention, Sonoma County Office of Education* Mr. Feldman defined reading as thinking, guided by print; and that speaking and writing are ways to make the thinking overt. According to Mr. Feldman’s synopsis of the research, engagement is key. He presented ideas on how to engage students as well as ways to engage teachers in the presence of the craft...teaching. Both make learning visible. He also presented research showing academic rigor in preparation for college and the workplace are not necessarily the complexity of the content, but more about the quality of the thinking. He highlighted the importance of vocabulary and emphasized researched lists of words that intentionally build academic language. My take-away is a need to simplify all the clutter of initiatives and the overwhelming new Common Core standards with a “back-to-the-basics” focus on student engagement, and teacher engagement.

Yolanda Westerberg, *Educational Consultant, Westerberg & Associates*

This session was specifically on research-based validated strategies and activities for informative/ explanatory text with an emphasis on K-5 writing. I came away with a practical school-wide frame with resources and strategies to improve writing. She brought the Common Core right back to the basics of sound instruction based on research. She demonstrated how by sharing “small moments” teachers actually model oral rehearsal for writing and at the same time build relationships and community. My take away is a framework that is simple, doable and puts the “humanities” back into language arts.

As education gets more complex and more uncertain; and as initiatives, programs and software make their promises; it is good to have the affirmation of solid research and great thinkers: a viable curriculum, focused instruction/assessment, student engagement in higher order thinking and teacher collaboration around best practices. We can do this! We are doing this!

Windy River Elementary

The beginning of the school year started a couple of days early. According to the ESL Improvement Plan and the Recent Arrivers Plan, we had stated that we were going to train several of our secondary teachers to become Trainers of Teachers with the Constructing Meaning instructional methods sponsored by E.L. Achieve from California. We have been using this program since 2005 with elementary teachers being taught how to teach language to all students in all areas. With this in mind, last year nine of our secondary teachers received this training and three of those teachers wanted to continue their training to become our MCSD district teacher trainers. These teachers were Dawn Callow from Riverside H.S. and Aaron Byers from Irrigon High School, and Theresa Procter-Reece from Windy River. Together they spent five days receiving training in Portland becoming certified trainers.

In a nutshell, these teachers will be training 10 other secondary teachers how to teach language also in their special content areas. This is because of the number of ELL students in our district;

it is good instruction for all students, and the number of students who need language acquisition within the core classes they are taking.

There are five main areas which address Constructing Meaning. They are:

1. **Understanding Backward Design**- This is designing instruction that addresses the cognitive and linguistic demands of required to meet stated student learning goals. It starts from the goal and works backward.
2. **Language as Part of Content Teaching**- This is the brick and mortar of content (nouns) and functional (verbs) of direct instruction. This provides sentence frames for students to work with.
3. **Interactive Reading and Note-Making**- This is using reading strategies and note-taking tools that facilitate comprehension and focus students on the most important elements of core text.
4. **Oral Language Practice**- This is the structure of frequent opportunities for students to use –in speech- the target language of the learning goals.
5. **Academic Writing Support**- This provides tools and facilitates processes that support students in producing complex academic writing.

I am writing a one page plan where the district will implement the staff development mentioned above. We believe that it will make a difference in secondary education meeting our new standards in the Common Core and OAKS.

Management's Discussion and Analysis

Financial Highlights

The district is continuing to see changes on the financial front; however, none appear to be significant financial gains or losses to the district. The areas below highlight the issues we have knowledge of since the last meeting:

1. The district will be receiving both the forest fees and small high school grants again in the 2012-13 fiscal year. The forest fees will reduce our state school funding, thus, the net effect is zero on our budgets.
2. There has been a slight increase in the per ADM payment issued by the state.
3. The district is expected to see a slight increase in the number of students, thus, there should be a slight increase in the overall payment from the state.

Future Financial Planning

The district is still expecting to have the following financial outlays over the next few months:

1. The purchase of 2 additional vehicles to allow each community to have a reliable means of transportation for staff training. The district is currently waiting for the 2013 government pricing to be established on the vehicles.
2. Computers for the students will continue to be upgraded with refurbished computers. The goal will be to eliminate the Dell 270 computers completely due to their age and reliability.

Current Financial Issues and Concerns

Based on recent conversations with Michael Wiltfong, Director of School Finance Oregon Department of Education, the state is expecting an increase in state school funding in 2013-14; however, based on estimated cost increases (PERS, OEBS, etc.) to simply maintain the spending levels of \$5.7B the increase would need to be approximately \$6.3B – this is to maintain current levels. The district will be forecasting budgets starting in September to ensure the stated goal of \$.5m reduction is still adequate to meet the financial needs of the district.

Maintenance

The district has 4 major concerns to address over the next 18-24 months:

1. Heppner High School Boiler
2. AC Houghton Boiler
3. Pavement crack sealing at all schools
4. Irrigon Elementary School ground water issues.

The Heppner High School boiler analysis was completed in July and the price tag was \$350,000. Thus, the school district is looking at a lessor option of upgrading the controller to establish on and off periods based on school occupancy. The district is currently exploring different vendors and getting a second opinion on the overall direction the district needs to go with all HVAC systems. The ACH HVAC system was operating efficiently; however, they could also benefit from a controller upgrade.

The crack sealing project was completed by the Morrow County Road Department over the summer and we are expecting to increase the useful life of the parking lots by 10 years.

The Irrigon Elementary high water issue on the East side of the building (parking lot) has been addressed with a HUGE effort from Paul Danielson (which the district owes a great deal of thanks to for his time and effort). A sump pump was installed and the water drained; however, the district is having Morrow County Road Department. The initial assessment is that we have a bigger water issue than two ponds on each side of the building. We are sending building plans and will continue to keep you posted on the prognosis for IES.

See the separate document of the cost evaluation of Morrow County District Office maintenance schedule.

District Office Analysis August 7, 2012

Summary

The School District has completed a review of the District Office building and arranged a summary of costs into two categories: Long Term Maintenance and Annual Operating Costs. The goal is to identify a long-term plan to close the District Office and move the staff to Heppner Elementary School. The goal would be to accomplish this task over the 12-24 months.

Long Term Maintenance

1. Gym – re-roofing \$8,175 and painting \$13,609. The roofing quote was received in 2010 and the painting quote was received in 2007.
2. Main Building – building repair/painting/roof \$34,000 - \$61,000. In 2007 we received two bids to work on the exterior of the building (some brick work, painting, roof work). The roof did have some work completed at that time; however, would it's nearly time to have more work completed.
3. Main Building – interior paint was completed 15 years ago. Carpet was installed 15 years ago.
4. Main Building – Electrical – should be in good shape lights updated a few years ago.
5. Main Building – HVAC – new boiler installed last year.
6. Main Building - Plumbing – nothing done for years and nobody knows what has been done in the past.
7. Main Building – Foundation – this is where we may want to get some professional guidance. The interior concrete on the North side of the building is flaking off in large sheets and what

appears to be the load bearing center wall which is made of bricks is deteriorating and crumbles to the touch. The other exterior walls are covered at and we were not able to visually inspect. However, on the South side of the building there has been numerous instances over the years where water has entered the building and flowed through the server room to the lower bathroom. Until we receive some professional guidance I am not sure what the solution would be to handle the foundation issues.

8. Parking lot – we had the building sealed last year; however, the parking lot would need to be crack sealed the estimate was \$7,550 in 2010; however, based on the highway run off it appears there is significant damage and it may need to be resurfaced in spots.

The maintenance the district is anticipating over the next few years would amount to \$65,000 to \$91,000 (based on quotes over 5 years ago), we are assuming that the quotes would be significantly higher than what we have documented. This estimate does not include anything being done to the foundation.

Annual Operating Costs

Account	Description	YTD Transactions
100.2540.0325.001.000.000	OPERATION /ELECTRICIT/	\$4,609.59
100.2540.0326.001.000.000	OPERATION /FUEL /	\$18,617.29
100.2540.0327.001.000.000	OPERATION /WATER & SE/	\$1,399.02
100.2540.0328.001.000.000	OPERATION /GARBAGE /	\$1,407.16
100.2540.0351.001.000.000	OPERATION /TELEPHONE /	\$6,581.97
100.2540.0352.001.000.000	Alarms	\$2,237.96
100.2544.0322.001.000.000	CARE UPKEE/REP & MAIN/ CARE/UPKEEP	\$939.69
100.2544.0324.001.000.000	EQUIP/RENTAL	\$4,484.92
100.2540.0322.003.001.000	Rep & Maint/DISTRICT OFF	\$2,744.49
100.2542.0322.003.001.000	REP & MAINT/DO REPAIR AND	\$1,732.08
100.2543.0322.003.001.000	MAINTENANCE CARE-UPKEE/RENTALS	\$2,360.00
100.2543.0324.003.001.000	/DO	\$51.11
100.2543.0416.003.001.000	OPEN POS/DISTRICT OFF	\$916.94
	Total	<u>\$48,082.22</u>

Not all these cost would necessarily be eliminated; however, with the consolidation at Heppner Elementary School we can expect to see a significant decrease in the overall expenditures in the District Office overhead expenditures. The relocation to the elementary school would translate to one or two classified positions.

Cost of relocating

The main expenditure of the relocation would be associated with the construction of four offices and the purchase of cubical material for fiscal services. The vast majority of the work would be completed in-house, thus, the main expense would simply be materials. I am assuming the entire relocation cost would be under \$20,000 (one time expenditure).