

Tools for Instructional Teams and Teachers



Collegial Learning:
Homework

Collegial Learning

The purpose of a learning community is “realized when all its members are engaged in learning. Some of teachers’ learning is called professional development, but that, of course, is only one avenue for learning; teachers also learn from each other, from the trials and errors of plying their craft, from each student’s own story,” (S. Redding, 2005).

Simultaneously, individual teachers are at work in their classrooms and teams collaborate toward cumulative plans. Collegial Learning happens when a district and school ensure the quality time that allows teams of teachers to work together.

Moving away from independent planning to work again as a team should not slow the momentum. It will confirm the quality of individual planning with the collective thinking-- validating the best of teaching and learning. As you will see, with a solid plan for working as a team, the pace will be consistent and the quality of well-planned lessons and solid implementation of the Indicators of Effective Practice guaranteed.

Following are suggested steps to Collegial Learning:

Step 1: Continue to align instructional units for the year

Step 2: Collaboratively review individual plans to define and document collective grade level/
department/subject instruction plans

Step 3: Develop a plan for supporting colleagues using an interview and observation tool

Step 1: Instructional Units for the Year

Secure the teaming that began the process to align instruction to standards, curriculum and assessment, and continue this planning. Yes, even while teachers may be applying the first well-planned unit in their individual classrooms, the need for the next unit is just around the bend. It is necessary that the team move forward with the management of a future unit to arrange all the parts for a well-aligned document. Remember, it is only with the right map that all other instruction and learning can be effective in this systematic planning.

Okay, so you’ve already accomplished this task once. Keep it rolling using the same framework for developing Units of Instruction and Two-Week Plans as first introduced. Standards, leveled objectives, pre and post test. The second round is always faster! Ready, set, go!

Step 2: Document Plans

Teachers work to develop instructional plans. When time allows they return with those plans to the team, and compile and synchronize the work to establish the official record for that grade level and subject.

“The business of schools is to invent tasks, activities, and assignments that the students find engaging, and that bring them into profound interactions with content and processes they will need to master to be judged well educated” (Schlechty, pg. 53). In this collaborative approach of curriculum development, the value in knowledge and experiences of two, three, or four people outweighs the isolation found in traditional instructional planning and teaching.

Additionally, teams can determine the quality of the pre- and post-tests after reviewing students’ accomplishments of the target learning statements. Analyzing the results of those tests not only confirms the quality of the assessment, but encourages a team to consider the quality of the activities assigned as instructional interventions for the students they teach between pre- and post-testing. This may also become part of the team discussion.

Ultimately, a systematic team review of the developed units of instruction is suggested. Deciding how to create a steady, continuous improvement in the future should be the goal. That goal can be reached from different paths, just as the original development, but it is that kind of consistent improvement that marks true professionalism.

Step 3: Support Colleagues

A “Teacher Interview and Classroom Observation Checklist” gives a snapshot glimpse to the Indicators of Effective Practice within an individual classroom. Used as a tool for self-assessment, or a guide for mentoring and supporting colleagues (team members), it enriches the conversation and interpretation of the Indicators.

Self-reflection is a powerful strategy that, practiced consistently, produces healthy adjustment and change or confirmation in practice. Some teachers do this as a natural strategy in their self-learning. The Teacher Interview and Classroom Observation Checklist is a tool that might guide that self-reflection regarding the effective practice indicators.

Daily Instruction Plan—Homework

Learning doesn’t end with the school day. Darn it. Homework is a great way to practice lessons, master learning statements, and exercise self-directed learning. Homework builds independent study habits. We suggest that a student should do about



10 minutes of homework each night for each grade level, at least four nights a week. In other words, a first-grader would have 10 minutes of homework and an eighth-grader would have 80 minutes of homework. Ah, the poor 12th grader—closer to college and the real world, it seems. But this is for all subjects, from all teachers. This is a guideline that steadily builds homework habits over time. Keep in mind that as you develop leveled homework assignments, the student will be getting assignments for other subjects, and perhaps from other teachers.

Homework should be personalized, so that it is appropriate to each student's current level of achievement of the learning statements. Completing the Homework Plan on the following page is the last step in this instructional planning.

Homework assignments, like the leveled assignments for Independent Work and Computer-Based Learning, can be written in a designated public place (i.e. board, white board, etc.) each day or given to students on assignment sheets along with their Independent Work and Computer-Based Learning. One assignment sheet for each of your three groups for the week—target, enhanced, and prerequisite, and as indicated previously, you may choose to use symbols or some more colorful designation for each group.

Lots of planning. But the payoff is in the classroom, and for you and your students. Job well done. You will have a complete Instructional Plan in no time.

Following is the fourth of five forms in this Collegial Learning series suggested for use.





4 School:

Homework

Teacher: _____ Subject: _____ Grade/Class Level: _____

Date of first class day in the Unit: _____ Theme: _____

Class sessions in this Unit period: _____

		Homework Activity (as you would explain it to the students) Reference worksheets, pages in textbooks, etc.
Leveled Learning Statements		
Target:		
Enhanced:		
Prerequisite:		
Leveled Learning Statements		
Target:		
Enhanced:		
Prerequisite:		

Essential Questions:

