

**IMPLEMENTATION OF A COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY PROGRAM
AT GAUGER-COBBS MIDDLE SCHOOL**

by

Harold Shaw

An executive position paper submitted to the Faculty of the University of Delaware in
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in
Education Leadership

Spring 2014

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ABSTRACT

This Executive Position Paper documents efforts taken to establish a comprehensive school-wide literacy program at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School. Consistent with secondary schools across the nation, school-wide and sub-group achievement data for Gauger students supported the need for an increased focus in the area of literacy. Efforts taken were aligned to the research-based “elements of effective secondary literacy programs”, identified by Biancaros and Snow (2006) in their report entitled *Reading next—A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy*. These efforts included implementation of new literacy strategies, professional development activities, program evaluation, review of research based interventions and reflection activities to support Response to Intervention, the development of the master schedule, and to support increased self-efficacy. In addition to describing each effort, the paper reports the findings and reflections associated with each action taken. As a final element, the paper examines missed opportunities and positive takeaways, before identifying recommendations for future actions.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Long deemed a function of elementary schools, there is a pressing need for improved literacy efforts at the secondary level. In a document from the Institute of Education Sciences authors Bates, Breslow, and Hupert (2009) report that nearly two-thirds of 8th and 12th graders tested score below proficiency as measured by the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP). Even more concerning is the fact that nearly a quarter of this same population score below the “most basic” benchmark of the NAEP assessment. Like many of the nation’s secondary schools, there is a need for improved literacy efforts at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School. Table 1 presents DCAS Reading proficiency rates for the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years by students sub-group.

Table 1 DCAS Reading Proficiency Rates by Sub-Group (2011-2012 & 2012-2013)		
Sub-group	2011-2012	2012-2013
African-American	57%	55%
White	70%	71%
Hispanic	61%	62%
Low-Income	57%	57%
Special Education	19%	21%
ELL	11%	57%

* Note – ELL is a small cell and proficiency rates can change dramatically based on a few students*

The data in Table 1 supports the need for improved literacy instruction at Gauger-Cobbs. To address this problem the administrative team at Gauger Cobbs has taken action to develop a comprehensive school-wide literacy program. Efforts have included the use of Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) and Reciprocal Teaching (RT) to improve literacy instruction, as well as the development of a school-wide Response to Intervention Model to provide literacy support to struggling students. Current efforts are aimed at establishing literacy instruction in all content areas through implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

Organization of the ELP

This portfolio is organized into six chapters and ten appendices, labeled A through J. Chapter 1 contains a summary of the problem statement and an overview of the document. Chapter 2 sets the context for improvement efforts, including presentation of the following: organizational context, organizational goal, problem statement, improvement goal context, and the improvement goal. Chapters 3 and 4 present improvement strategies implemented at Gauger and a review of the outcomes associated with strategies. Chapter 5 contains reflections on the outcomes associated with improvement strategies, while Chapter 6 presents reflections related to professional growth. In addition, the appendices include my original proposal and the nine artifacts completed to support improved literacy instruction at Gauger, as well as my own professional growth.

Chapter 2

SETTING THE CONTEXT AND PROBLEM

Organizational Context

Located in Newark, Delaware, Gauger-Cobbs is one of 4 middle schools in the Christina School District. With a total of 26 traditional schools, the district is the largest in Delaware and services students in the city of Wilmington and surrounding suburbs. Enrollment in the district has steadily declined in recent years dropping from nearly 20,000 in 2002 to just fewer than 17,000 in 2013 – 2014. The district is home to a diverse student body summarized in Table 2 below:

Table 2 Christina School District Demographical Breakdown (Based on 2012-2013 DOE School Profile Data)	
African-America	40.3%
White	34.3%
Hispanic	18.3%
Asian	4.3%
Low-Income	61.7%
Special Education	15.0%
Second Language Learners	8.1%

The drop-out rate in 2011-2012 was 9.1%, compared to 7.8% in 2010-2011 and 5.6 in 2009 - 2010. Additionally, 11th grade SAT scores show that the district is lagging behind the state in both participation (89% v. 93%) and achievement with an average total score of 1,209 compared to 1,261 for the state.

Gauger-Cobbs Middle School is home to nearly 1,220 students in grades 6 through 8. Demographic data for Gauger, presented in Table 3, is comparable to that of the district.

Table 3 Gauger-Cobbs Middle School Demographical Breakdown (Based on 2012-2013 DOE School Profile Data)	
African-America	40.3%
White	37.3%
Hispanic	17.9%
Asian	3.2%
Low-Income	61.4%
Special Education	11.3%
Second Language Learners	3.3%

Gauger-Cobbs has a total of 94 instructional units including: 69 teachers, 1 librarian, 12 pupil support units, and 12 instructional support staff. The demographic breakdown for instructional staff is as follows: 77.7% White, 21.3% African American, and 1.2% American Indian. Additionally, Gauger's staff has a core group of experienced and well educated teachers with 64% having greater than ten years of experience and 56.4% having earned a master's degree or higher.

As it relates to student achievement, Gauger-Cobbs failed to meet AYP for the 2012-2013 school-year, missing AYP targets for "Students with Disabilities" in both the original and growth model. Although targets were met in every other AYP cell, there are still clear literacy needs for many of Gauger's student subgroups. Table 4 displays the percentage of students that scored below proficiency on the 2012-2013 DCAS Reading assessment by student sub-group.

Table 4 Percent Below Proficiency by Sub-Group 2012-2013 DCAS Reading		
Test Grade	Sub-Group	Percent Below Proficiency
6	All Students	35.38
6	Hispanic	37.14
6	African American	41.71
6	White	28.21
6	Students with Disabilities	71.05
6	ELL	71.43
7	All Students	39.84
7	Hispanic	46.27
7	African American	45.91
7	White	30
7	Students with Disabilities	82.46
7	ELL	85.71
8	All Students	37.83
8	Hispanic	36.11
8	African American	48.77
8	White	29.19
8	Students with Disabilities	80
8	ELL	72.22

A review of the data in Table 4 makes clear that many of Gauger's student sub-groups are struggling, regardless of if AYP targets were met.

Organizational Role

In the summer of 2008 I was hired by Christina School District to serve as Assistant Principal at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School. At that time, the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP) was the state assessment and literacy proficiency for 8th graders had been nearly 80% for several years. DSTP scores had improved steadily since the inauguration of the test in 1998 at which time just over 50% of 8th

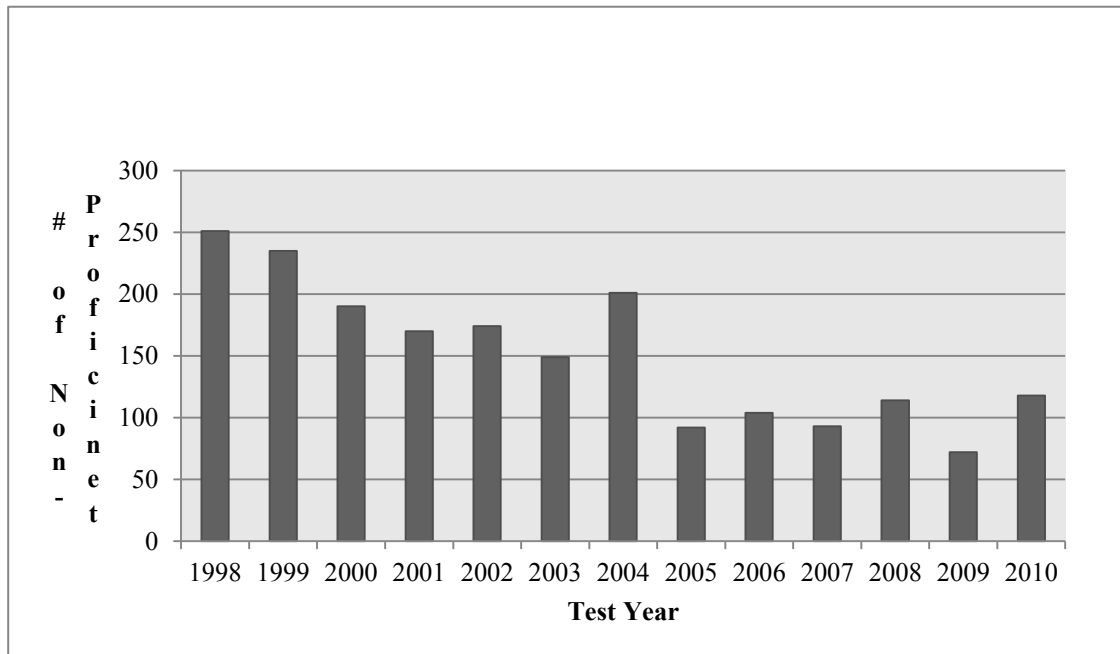
graders earned proficiency. In 2010-2011 the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS), a more rigorous and computer-based state assessment, replaced DSTP. This same year I enrolled in the University of Delaware's Doctor of Educational Leadership program and began looking more closely at issues within the building.

In the summer of 2012, I was named Principal at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School and quickly established that addressing the literacy needs of Gauger's students would be an area of heightened focus.

Problem Statement

In recent years the administrative team at Gauger-Cobbs has often referenced the "little m" during conversations with staff about student achievement. The "little m" is a less wordy, informal mission statement that highlights the responsibility to prepare Gauger students for high-school. That being said, each year a significant number of Gauger's 8th grade students score below proficient on the state reading assessment and enter high-school ill equipped for the challenges that lie ahead. To help frame the problem, Figure 1 displays the number of 8th grade students from 1998 to 2010 that scored below proficient on the DSTP.

Figure 1 Number of Non-Proficient Students as Measured by DSTP



Although clear progress was made, scores flattened out around 2005 leaving nearly 100 students below proficiency each year, suggesting that many students are not prepared for high-school, at least in terms of their literacy skills.

While this issue is clearly concerning, Gauger’s literacy data is representative of a national trend at the secondary level. In a report from the Alliance for Excellent Education entitled *Reading Next: A Vision for Action Research in Middle and High-School Literacy*, authors Biancarosa & Snow report that an estimated 32% of high-school graduates are not prepared for college English composition courses and that 40% of high-school graduates do not have the literacy skills required by employers (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). To make matters worse NAEP data related to secondary literacy has been “flat” since NAEP’s creation in the 1970’s. Part of the issue is that

efforts to improve literacy have often been focused at the elementary level and curtail at the middle and high school level (Heller & Greenleaf, 2007). However, that is not to say that research does not exist to guide secondary leaders.

In Biancarosa & Snow’s Reading Next article, referenced above, the authors provide “15 Key Elements” that can be utilized to build an effective secondary literacy program. These elements are organized into two categories, “Instruction” or “Infrastructure” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Table 5 identifies each of the 15 elements supported by Biancarosa & Snow and the assigned category:

Table 5 Key Elements of Effective Secondary Literacy Programs	
<i>Instructional Improvements</i>	<i>Infrastructure Improvements</i>
1. Direct, explicit comprehension instruction	9. Ongoing formative assessment
2. Effective instructional principals embedded in content	10. Extended time for literacy
3. Motivation and self-directed learning	11. Professional Development
4. Text-Based collaborative learning	12. Ongoing summative assessments of students and programs
5. Strategic Tutoring	13. Teacher teams
6. Diverse Text	14. Leadership
7. Intensive Writing	15. A comprehensive and coordinated literacy program
8. A technology component	

The authors acknowledge that all 15 elements are not necessary for a successful program, but emphasize that the incorporation of multiple elements will

create a stronger program. In order to ensure that students are prepared for high school and beyond, Gauger-Cobbs must take action to address the literacy needs of students. Specifically, Gauger must develop a comprehensive literacy program, incorporating many of the elements recommended by Biancarosa & Snow.

Improvement Goal

Although the “little m” speaks to exiting 8th grade students, addressing literacy concerns at Gauger will require a school-wide approach across all grade levels. While this program should incorporate many of Biancarosa & Snow’s recommended elements, there are three critical elements that must be present. The first critical element is the development of a strong “core literacy” curriculum. The “core” curriculum is delivered to all students and is foundational to the “comprehensive and coordinated literacy program”, discussed by Biancarosa and Snow. Second, the program must include literacy instruction in all content areas. Described as “extended time for literacy instruction” by Biancarosa and Snow, content area literacy efforts increase the amount of time students spend reading and ensure that reading is viewed as a meaningful activity that supports learning, rather than an isolated activity. Third, the program must include a variety of intervention opportunities for struggling students that are aligned to their individual needs. This will require a “comprehensive and coordinated” system including universal screeners to identify struggling students, diagnostic assessment tools to diagnose individual needs, and frequent formative assessment to monitor progress. With that in mind, the organizational improvement

goal is to establish a school-wide literacy program, including the elements described above at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School. In this pursuit, the “15 Elements” described by Biancarosa & Snow’s will serve as a guide for the development of the program, which was the basis of my proposal in November of 2012 (Appendix A).

Chapter 3

IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Rationale

While efforts to increase literacy skills have historically targeted elementary teachers and students, there is a clear need for improved practice at the secondary level. Results from national and state assessments reveal that many of the nation's secondary students have significant deficits. Fortunately, there is growing research to support district and school based leadership in efforts to develop the infrastructure and instructional practice needed to address the literacy needs of adolescent learners. With this in mind, I utilized the fifteen elements identified by Biancarosa and Snow in their report entitled *Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy* as a framework to guide my efforts. Use of this framework ensured that literacy efforts at Gauger were supported by research and provided for insight into potential next steps. Table 6 presents actions steps, discussed in detail below, including the year in which the action was taken and the corresponding appendix.

Table 6 Improvement efforts for literacy		
Action Step	Year	Appendix
PD Plan - PALS Implementation	2011-2012	B
Program Evaluation – PALS	2011-2012	C
RTI Pilot Program - Case Study	2011-2012	D
Program Evaluation – PALS & RT	2012-2013	E
RTI Handbook		F
Master Schedule & Human Resource Reflection	2012-2013	G
PD Plan – Literacy in all Content Areas	2013-2014	H
Research Review	2013-2014	I
Student Efficacy and Mindset Reflection	2013-2014	J

Action Steps

Planning for initial efforts to establish a comprehensive school-wide literacy program began in the spring of the 2010-2011 school-year. At the time I was serving as assistant principal at Gauger and through my early work at the University of Delaware had identified the need to improve core literacy instruction at Gauger-Cobbs. The following is a brief description of each action step, presented in order of implementation or delivery. It is important to note that outcomes or findings associated with each action are presented in the following chapter.

2011-2012

During the 2011-2012 school-year the following actions were taken to address literacy concerns at Gauger: (1) Implementation of PALS, (2) Program Evaluation of PALS, and (3) Piloting of RTI.

PD Plan - PALS Implementation

To strengthen core literacy instruction Peer Assisted Learning Strategies was selected for delivery and a professional development plan (Appendix B) was created to support implementation in the 2011-2012 school-year. Although the plan was modified prior to the start of the 2011-2012 school-year, key components were maintained and guided development of two important training sessions. The first session introduced staff to the PALS process and the partnered reading strategies that support development of fluency and comprehension skills. The second session provided teachers with the documents necessary for student training and the materials (i.e. student prompts) to support students in use of the partnered strategies. The first session was delivered during pre-service days and the second session was delivered in early September allowing PALS delivery to be in full swing by the start of October. This was an important first step and aligned with the following elements identified by Biancarosa and Snow: (1) Professional Development, (2) Text-Based Collaborative Learning, and (3) Direct, Explicit Comprehension Instruction.

Program Evaluation – Peer Assisted Learning Strategies

Later that same school year a program evaluation (Appendix C) was conducted to investigate the fidelity of implementation (process) and the impact on student outcomes associated with delivery of PALS. Findings from the evaluation are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

RTI Pilot Program – Case Study

The 2011-2012 school-year also marked the beginning of efforts to establish Response to Intervention at Gauger. The pilot program targeted 6th grade students and was delivered through a “pull-out” model. Despite targeting just one grade level, implementing the pilot presented challenges and it was clear that expanding the program school-wide would require reflection and creativity. To support this process, a case study (Appendix D) was conducted including a review of the following: (1) student and teacher demographics, (2) an overview of the 2011-2012 RTI pilot, (3) the 2011-2012 master schedule, (4) selection of interventionists, (5) description of interventions and resources, and (6) review of teacher feedback related to the pilot. This review was followed by a multiple-frame analysis providing reflection in the following frame areas: (1) structural, (2) human resources, (3) political, and (4) symbolic. The purpose of this process was to examine actions necessary to support RTI implementation by considering the process through multiple lenses. This process resulted in recommended “Leadership Actions” to support school-wide implementation of Response to Intervention and aligned to the following element identified by Biancarosa and Snow: (1) Development of a Comprehensive and Coordinated Literacy Program

2012-2013

Following the 2011-2012 school-year I was named principal of Gauger-Cobbs and was in a position to have greater influence in the decision making process. As indicated earlier, this resulted in an updated master schedule which allowed for

implementation of school-wide Response to Intervention. However, the adjusted schedule and RTI model presented new challenges and the need for further reflection. To this end, two actions were taken following completion of the 2012-2013 school-year which provided opportunities for reflection and evaluation. The first action (Appendix E) evaluated the use of PALS and Reciprocal Teaching for the purposes of intervention (PALS) and enrichment (RT). The second (Appendix F) reflected on the 2012-2013 master schedule and use of staff as a means of supporting a school-wide literacy program and a return to “teaming” of students and teachers.

Program Evaluation of PALS and RT

The program evaluation (Appendix E) of PALS and RT was a significant action because it was necessary for the administrative team to determine if implementation was impactful for students. As was the case above, findings from this evaluation are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Response to Intervention Handbook

Expansion of RTI required that new staff become familiar with interventions and the use of I-tracker Pro to measure progress. To support new staff an RTI handbook (Appendix F) was developed including the following: (1) Review of Research, (2) Review of Data, (3) Review of Interventions and Progress Monitoring Tools, and (4) an I-Tracker Pro Tutorial. The document supported efforts to establish a comprehensive and coordinated literacy program.

Master Schedule and Human Resource Reflection

The reflection on the master schedule and use of staff (Appendix G) was important because it examined the impact of dedicating 66 minutes per day to literacy intervention and enrichment. The document reviewed the following to support the development of staffing considerations and recommendations for the 2013-2014 master schedule: (1) comparison of 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 master schedules, (2) DCAS trend data, (3) instructional time analysis, (4) school-climate data, (5) discipline data, and (6) master schedule survey findings. From this review recommendations were developed to address the overall structure of the schedule, the length of the block, the inclusion of teaming, the delivery of social studies and science, and the rotating nature of the schedule. The document supports efforts to develop “A Comprehensive and Coordinated Literacy Program” and concludes with a description of the finalized 2013-2014 schedule.

2013-2014

Together, findings from the program evaluation and master schedule reflection, led to the removal of the school-wide literacy block and a return to a structure similar to that of the 2011-2012 school-year, requiring further action.

PD Plan – Literacy in all Content Areas

The removal of the school-wide literacy block and the roll-out of the Common Core State Standards placed an emphasis on literacy in all content areas for the 2013-2014 school-year. This realization led to the creation of a professional development plan (Appendix H) to support content area literacy. The plan reviewed the following prior to outlining proposed professional development activities: (1) school description, (2) school-wide instructional focus, (3) context of literacy interventions, and (4) assessment data. The professional development plan provided recommended activities for building level professional development days and large group PLC days. Activities were adapted from the text *Common Core English Language Arts in a PLC at Work Grades 6-8*, which was purchased by district office to assist schools with the roll-out of common core. This effort aligned with the following elements identified by Biancarosa and Snow: (1) Professional Development and (2) Text-Based Collaborative Learning.

Research Review

Another important action taken was to expand my personal knowledge of existing programs or strategies designed support struggling students by conducting a research review (Appendix I). Aligned with Biancarosa and Snow's call for "Leadership" development, this is a critical action as Gauger leadership is still seeking to identify programs or interventions to support the RTI process and special education students. Previous efforts to reach this population (i.e. Read 180) or strategies (i.e.

PALS) have resulted in inconsistent outcomes. In some cases, these inconsistencies have been the result of a “poor fit”, such as Read 180, which requires 90 minutes of instruction every day; a feat which cannot be accomplished through our current master schedule. In addition, programs that rely heavily on technology (i.e. Read 180 or Achieve 3000) are limited in reach due to both lack of and demand for computers. To assist in identifying programs that match the needs of Gauger’s students and resources, the following criteria were identified: (1) program delivery, (2) skills addressed, (3) program costs, and (4) program effectiveness. The primary source of information for programs was identified through review of intervention reports developed by the What Works Clearinghouse (WCC). The WCC was selected because of their strict protocols for evaluating research studies and the use of intervention reports allowed information pertinent to all four criteria to be gathered from a single resource. Through the WWC the following programs were identified for review: Corrective Reading, Read Naturally, Language!, Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS), Reciprocal Teaching (RT), Reading Mastery, and Project CRISS. The result was a recommendation for the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team to consider the use of either Read Naturally or PALS to address the needs of special education students. In short Read Naturally could be delivered as recommended in Gauger’s master schedule and would provide a multi-level program to support students of varying abilities. This program can be delivered through hard-copy materials and is scripted and sequenced for teachers, thus eliminating the additional challenge of designing intervention. The challenge associated with Read Naturally would be the initial cost of purchasing the materials

and ensuring that staff had the necessary professional development to implement the program with fidelity. In the case of PALS, the program could easily fit into our schedule as evidenced by its previous use. Additionally, there would be virtually no cost associated with the program, as we have the necessary materials and training documents needed to support implementation. The hurdle with PALS would be ensuring that there is consistency with regard to implementation fidelity, which has proven to be challenging during previous efforts.

Student Efficacy and Mindset Reflection

In addition to the literacy specific actions described above, efforts have also been taken to address the issue of student motivation and self-efficacy, which supports Biancarosa and Snow's call for efforts to establish "Motivation and Self-Directed Learning" in students. These efforts were initiated through our work with the Vision 2015 leadership team beginning in the 2011-2012 school-year. Although there is not a direct line from this work to the creation of a school-wide literacy program, there is significant research related to the negative impact of low self-efficacy in the classroom and beyond. As a result, I believe that addressing mindset and self-efficacy represents a significant action in supporting struggling learners and attempts to establish a comprehensive school-wide literacy program. The document, entitled *Creating a Culture of Student Efficacy* (Appendix J), includes the following: (1) review of research related to student efficacy and the growth mindset, (2) review of 2011-2012 mindset efforts, (3) review of 2012-2013 mindset efforts, (4) analysis of student

survey response data, (5) analysis of teacher survey response data, and (6) recommended actions for the 2013-2014 school year.

While there is still work to be done, each of the actions described above have significantly contributed to Gauger's efforts to establish a comprehensive school-wide literacy program. The significance of each artifact is discussed in the following chapters.

Chapter 4

IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES RESULTS

As described above, there were nine separate actions taken by the leadership at Gauger to establish a school-wide literacy program. Each of these actions had significance in their own right and contributed to the larger process. The following is description of results or findings from improvement actions.

2011-2012

The efforts taken in 2011-2012 were significant because they represented the first steps towards establishing a comprehensive school-wide literacy program and because they produced results that could be used to guide future action.

Program Evaluation – Peer Assisted Learning Strategies

The first action that produced findings was the program evaluation (Appendix B) examining PALS implementation. The evaluation examined the following evaluation questions:

Process Question:

Are teachers adhering to the prescribed PALS format?

Outcome Question:

Does PALS result in improved reading comprehension?

To investigate the process question, I created the “PALS Implementation Rubric” which evaluated PALS classrooms in the following areas: (1) student pairings, (2) use of time, (3) reading strategies, (4) teacher engagement, (5) use of incentives, and (6) student engagement. Based on classroom observation teachers earned a score of 1, 2, or 3, which was described as “no implementation”, “partial implementation”, or “full implementation” respectively. Additionally, a “mean implementation score” and “mean score by rubric item” was calculated using the rubric score from each area identified above. This allowed for comparison of both mean classroom scores and specific rubric items. Findings from this review indicated that the majority of classrooms were in the “partial implementation” range and that professional development was needed to support teachers in the area of “reading strategies” and “student engagement”.

As it relates to the outcome question, DCAS data was unavailable at the time of completion; instead results from the R.A.R.E prompts were utilized to measure improved comprehension. R.A.R.E (Re-state/Answer/Reasons/Example) was a rubric utilized by the ELA department to both guide and grade student writing samples. Students writing samples could earn a 3 (meets standards), 2 (approaching standards), or 1 (below standard) based on the quality of their response in the following areas: (1) re-state, (2) answer, (3) reasons, and (4) examples. R.A.R.E response data was collected for each class in the sample and was utilized to calculate a “mean growth” score. “Mean growth” scores were compared to the “mean implementation scores” to identify relationships between implementation fidelity and student outcomes. This

comparison revealed “mean growth” scores were higher in classrooms with higher “mean implementation scores”

While the program evaluation produced some important findings, it is important to note its limitations. First, the evaluation collected process and outcome data for 7th grade classrooms only and one cannot assume that the findings would be similar for 6th and 8th grade classrooms. Second, student outcomes were measured using the R.A.R.E response rubric, which allows for variances in teacher scoring.

RTI Pilot Program – Case Study

The next significant set of findings was produced by the case study (Appendix D) which reflected on the 2011-2012 RTI pilot program. The case study examined the “pull-out” pilot, that was utilized to support 6th grade students in need of intervention, through multiple frames. This reflection produced recommendations for the administrative team. While not all of the recommended actions were implemented, two resulted in significant actions to support future RTI efforts. First, the process resulted in a recommendation to change the structure of the master schedule to better accommodate school-wide RTI. Specifically, the recommendation called for a five block A/B schedule including a school-wide literacy block. The inclusion of the literacy block would allow for the delivery of interventions to support struggling students and opportunities for enrichment to stretch high achieving students. This model was implemented during the 2012-2013 school year to support school-wide implementation of RTI. The second recommendation resulting in action, was the call

for development of an “RTI Handbook” (Appendix F). The purpose of this resource would be to provide guidance related to the following: (1) the vision for RTI, (2) objectives associated with RTI, (3) roles and responsibilities, and (4) description of interventions and resources, and (5) use of I-tracker pro.

2012-2013

Efforts were expanded in 2012-2013 through a modified schedule, which included a school-wide literacy block. This block was utilized to deliver PALS to students in need of support (DCAS 1’s or 2’s), while RT was delivered as an enrichment to students scoring 3 or 4 on the DCAS. All core content teachers (Math, ELA, Social Studies, and Science) were engaged in delivery of either PALS or RT.

Program Evaluation – Peer Assisted Learning Strategies and Reciprocal Teaching

This document (Appendix E) evaluated the implementation and outcomes associated with the use of PALS and RT, which was delivered through the school-wide literacy block. Evaluation questions for each program were as follows:

Peer Assisted Learning Strategies:

Process Question

Are teachers adhering to the prescribed PALS format?

Outcome Question

Does delivery of PALS result in improved reading comprehension as measured by DCAS?

Reciprocal Teaching

Process Question

Are collaborative student groups utilizing RT strategies to guide discussions?

Outcome Question

Does delivery of RT result in improved reading comprehension as measured by DCAS?

Data utilized to measure the process, or fidelity of PALS implementation was collected through teacher observation and use of the evaluator created PALS Implementation Rubric. The rubric rated classrooms in each of the following components of PALS: Use of Time, Reading Strategies (are students doing it correctly?), Teacher Engagement, Use of Incentives, and Student Engagement. Scores ranged from 1 or “No Implementation” to 3 or “Full Implementation” and were issued for all 6 areas included on the rubric. To gather data related to the outcome question DCAS data was collected for each of the 6 PALS sections included in the sample described above. Data was retrieved from the I-tracker Pro application, operated by the Data Service Center, and was utilized to examine mean growth in each of the 6 classrooms. To analyze the data collected through the PALS implementation rubric, mean scores for each teacher were calculated in each area of implementation. To analyze the impact of PALS implementation, the mean growth (fall to spring) was calculated for each for classroom included in the sample. This data was analyzed to identify relationships between implementation fidelity and student achievement.

Review of implementation and outcome data revealed several trends related to PALS. In terms of implementation, all but one of the sample classrooms was identified

as being in “partial implementation” or “full implementation”. In terms of mean item scores for the sample classrooms “Use of Time” and “Use of Incentives” were strong aspects of implementation for 2012-2013. On the other hand, “Reading Strategies” and “Teacher Engagement” scored lower on the rubric and are areas of growth. In terms of outcomes, there is an inconsistent relationship between the assigned classroom implementation score and the mean fall to spring DCAS growth of sample classrooms. Specifically, higher implementation scores did not correlate to larger mean growth.

RT classrooms were rated on both teacher and student engagement during the RT cycle (see Appendix B). Teachers were rated on 7 criteria for engagement before, during, and after the RT student cycle. On the other hand, students were rated on their ability to complete the following RT strategies: Predicting, Questioning, Clarifying, and Summarizing. As was the case with the PALS, scoring ranged from 1 (No implementation) to 3 (Full Implementation). Fidelity to implementation of RT was examined through use of the RT implementation rubric, which examined both teacher and student “engagement”. Based on this rubric, “mean implementation scores” for each rubric item, as well as the “mean classroom implementation score” were calculated. Data related to the outcome questions for RT was collected through administration of DCAS. In total there were three administrations, one occurring in the fall window (October) and two occurring in the spring window (April/May). Students were assigned the higher of the two spring scores, providing two data points and the opportunity to measure growth from fall to spring. From this data a “mean growth” value was calculated for each classroom.

Review of data collected for Reciprocal Teaching suggest that teacher engagement and fidelity to the program is on the high end of the rubric, with all but one class earning a score on the high end of partial implementation or above. Also, teacher engagement related to pre cycle and post cycle activities (preparing/chunking the article, reviewing goals or strategies, and completing a comprehension check) was a strong point of implementation. Teacher engagement during the cycle (circulation, feedback, and prompting) were strong for the majority of the sample, but were areas of growth for some of the sample staff. In terms of student engagement, scores were generally lower than scores for teacher engagement. While the table suggest that there is room for growth around all of the RT strategies, questioning had the lowest mean strategy score and lowest mean scores for criteria. As was the case with PALS, the relationship between the mean classroom implementation score and the mean DCAS growth value for RT was also inconclusive.

Master Schedule & Human Resource Reflection

Another critical action was the reflection related to master scheduling and human resource allocation (Appendix G). As described in chapter 3, this document reviewed a variety of data points to identify strengths and potential areas of growth related to master scheduling. The document also reviewed staffing considerations as related to the following areas: (1) length of the block, (2) teaming, (3) delivery of social studies and science, and (4) the rotating schedule.

The document reviewed each of the following: (1) comparison of 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 master schedules, (2) DCAS trend data, (3) instructional time analysis, (4) school-climate data, (5) discipline data, and (6) master schedule survey findings. From this review the following concerns emerged:

- Due to inclusion of the school-wide literacy block, students lost 3,240 and 1,620 minutes of instruction for Math/ELA and Science/Social Studies respectively.
- For math the mean instructional score decreased for 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students at Gauger. While this mirrored a larger trend for the district and state, it is concerning, as math has been historically been a strength at Gauger.
- For math, mean scale scores fell for the vast majority of sub-groups across all grade levels from the 2011-2012 school-year.
- The mean score for “Total School Climate” dropped for all stakeholder groups.
- Significant decreases were visible in Teacher to Student Relations, Student to Student Relations, School Safety, and Bullying School-Wide.
- Compared to 2011-2012, there was an increase in total incidents in the 2012-2013 school-year.
- There were increased incidents of “Offensive Touching”, “Fighting”, and “Disrespect to Staff” during the 2012-2013 school-year.
- The master schedule survey revealed that teachers felt:
 - The length of the block was sufficient

- The length of the block impeded the PLC process
- Teachers benefited from the rotating schedule
- Students benefited from the rotating schedule
- That teaming should be a part of the schedule
- That Science and Social Studies should be delivered as semester courses.
- Too much time was dedicated to the literacy block.

These findings contributed to the development of recommendations for the 2013-2014 master schedule; including the following: (1) return to a 4-block A/B Schedule with a 35 minute “skinny”, (2) return to teacher and student teams, (3) deliver Science and Social Studies as semester courses, and (4) continue use to the rotating schedule.

2013-2014

Entering 2013-2014 the master schedule was once again revisited and adjusted to meet changing resources and school-based needs. As it relates to instructional elements, there was a singular focus in planning for the 2013-2014 school-year. That focus was the result of two critical factors identified by the administrative team. First, the planning process for implementation of the Common Core State Standards was underway, with roll-out set to begin in the fall of the 2013-2014 school-year. Second, a review of 2012-2013 assessment data revealed that Math performance, typically strong at Gauger, had declined in all three grade levels for 2012-2013. This was

attributed, at least in part, to the decreased instructional time allotted to all content areas to allow for the inclusion of a school-wide literacy block. As a result the focus of professional development activities for 2013-2014 is largely dedicated to embedding literacy instruction in all content areas. This aligns with the Common Core movement and Biancarosa and Snow call for “Extended Time for Literacy”, which calls for efforts that extend beyond a school-wide literacy block.

From an infrastructure perspective, there were two important adjustments that impacted Gauger’s efforts to develop a school-wide literacy program. First, the school-wide literacy block was removed from the master schedule, in response to decreased Math performance across all grade levels. Additionally, evaluation of both PALS and RT revealed that inconsistencies in implementation fidelity had resulted in inconsistent outcomes for students, limiting the outcomes associated with the literacy block. Second, I was unable to continue to fund the position of RT Coordinator, a part-time staff member that was greatly helpful in organizing interventions and supporting data entry. As a result, our ability to deliver tier 2 interventions has been greatly impacted and the majority of intervention is delivered through the use of our Read 180 lab that is staffed with a full time unit.

While these changes represent a step back in our efforts, to some degree, important actions have occurred during the 2013-2014 school-year. First, a research review (Appendix I) was conducted to identify program to support special education students. Second, a reflection around mindset and self-efficacy efforts (Appendix J) was conducted to identify progress and next steps.

Student Efficacy and Mindset Reflection

The final set of findings was derived from reflection around our mindset and student efficacy efforts (Appendix J). As described above, this document examined previous professional development activities and the results from mindset surveys administered to both staff and students. As a result the document includes findings related to progress made and recommendations for future efforts. Generally speaking, findings from the student survey suggest that the mindset message has yet to be “entirely received by students”. Student responses to growth mindset statements showed only a minor shift or no shift at all, while agreement with fixed mindset statements dropped more consistently. From the teacher perspective, the survey established that the vast majority of staff exposed students to the mindset lessons and goal setting activities, although 12% of teachers acknowledged not giving the lessons. In regards to teacher practices, responses to survey items 4 through 14 suggest that movement towards growth mindset friendly practices has occurred, but are not yet pervasive.

Based on these findings several “next steps” were identified to expand on previous efforts. The first recommendation was to launch 2013-2014 efforts with “mindset assemblies” introducing students the growth mindset and corresponding brain science. Second, a “daily mindset message” should be delivered via the morning announcements to ensure that the message does not fade. Third, the Gauger leadership should continue goal setting activities in the same manner as the previous year. This process should include thought and reflection around steps necessary to reach desired

goals. Fourth, “classroom mini-lessons” should be delivered twice per month to expand on the message communicated through the school-wide assemblies. Fifth, the Gauger leadership should pilot the use of “Brainology” a mindset curriculum created by the Mindset Words organization. For pilot purposes the curriculum could be delivered to our student in our afterschool program. Finally, the Gauger leadership should host a “Growth Mindset Night” to communicate with families about mindset and efforts to increase student self-efficacy.

The results of action steps presented above are critical to the improvement process as they help the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team determine next steps. In each of the past two years, planning for the next year was largely influenced by findings and recommendations from the previous year’s actions. Having implemented a number of improvement strategies designed to address literacy needs, I can now reflect back on these strategies as a whole and draw from them future recommendations for Gauger-Cobbs and beyond. These are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5

REFLECTION ON RESULTS OF IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

Efforts taken to establish a comprehensive literacy program at Gauger have proven to be a valuable learning experience, however at this point it is clear that the key elements discussed in chapter 2 have not yet been established. The following section presents reflections on improvement efforts as they relate to each of the three key elements. This review is followed by a summary of “missed opportunities” and “positive takeaways”.

Progress towards a School-Wide Literacy Program

In the development of the improvement goal, three elements were identified as necessary components of a comprehensive school-wide literacy block. In short the elements included the following:

- A strong core literacy program
- Systematic delivery of interventions to struggling students
- Content area literacy instruction

Core Literacy

In terms of strengthening the core literacy program, there was one key action taken by the leadership at Gauger that provided the opportunity for reflection. This action, the first taken, was the implementation of Peer Assisted Learning Strategies

(Appendix B) during the 2011-2012 school-year. Delivered through the ELA curriculum, students engaged in partnered reading strategies every other day for the first 32 minutes of the block. The leadership team was hopeful that this practice would improve both fluency and comprehension, while increasing reading stamina school-wide. To gauge implementation fidelity and the impact on student outcomes, a program evaluation (Appendix C) was conducted. In retrospect, there were two elements that limited the effectiveness of this effort. First, planning failed to include a process for monitoring and feedback related to program implementation. This resulted in inconsistent implementation across classrooms, which was revealed during the program evaluation (Appendix C) which occurred during the school-year. Some of this inconsistency was due to the fact that it was a new program in its first year of implementation; however, the lack of monitoring also allowed staff to alter the PALS process or ignore the initiative completely without awareness from the administrative team. Second, PALS was removed from the ELA classroom after the 2011-2012 school-year in favor of delivery through the school-wide literacy block. Despite inconsistencies in implementation fidelity, the use of PALS in this manner ensured that all students were engaged in strategies designed to improve fluency, comprehension, and reading stamina at least twice weekly. If maintained, I believe this effort could have significantly strengthened core literacy at Gauger.

Systemic Delivery of Interventions

In 2012-2013 a school-wide literacy block was incorporated into the master schedule to deliver both literacy intervention and enrichment to Gauger students. On

some level this action could be viewed as a means of strengthening core instruction; however, the true intent of this action was to provide a structure and time for intervention. In this model PALS was delivered as an intervention to students scoring a 1 or 2 on DCAS and Reciprocal Teaching was delivered as enrichment to students scoring 3 or 4 on DCAS. Looking back there were several issues with this model. One issue was the fact that there was no planning for monitoring; which produced inconsistent results and allowed for quiet defiance in regards to implementation, as was the case with PALS the previous year. Second, there was no diagnostic process in place to identify the specific needs of struggling students. Third, there was no menu of interventions to address varying needs, but rather a one size fits all approach with all students scoring below proficiency participating in PALS. Fourth, the use of PALS with struggling students only diminished the impact of the partnered reading strategies, as there was no longer a strong reader to fill the role of coach or tutor. Finally, the effort lacked structures for the monitoring and tracking of student progress.

Content Area Literacy

At the start of the 2013-2014 school-year, efforts were initiated to expand literacy instruction to all content areas. To support this effort, a professional development plan was developed with the support of Gauger's instructional coach. The plan was developed based on the recommendations and resources provided in the text: *Common Core English Language Arts in a PLC at Work Grades*, which was provided by district office as a tool to assist with implementation of the Common Core

State Standards. Still in progress, this action is critical, as it will support two key areas. First, content area literacy is a key component of the shift to Common Core State Standards. Second, literacy instruction in the content areas will provided the “extended time for literacy” identified as critical by Biancarosa and Snow. Still early in the process it is clear that professional development opportunities will need to continue beyond 2013-2014 for this effort to be successful.

Missed Opportunities

First, I believe that efforts to establish school-wide RTI through inclusion of the literacy block in 2012-2013 were rushed. While some efforts were taken to engage teachers in the process of expanding RTI efforts, opportunities for input were not frequent enough to ensure “buy-in” from staff. At the time, PALS was being delivered through ELA to strengthen core literacy instruction and was found to be in the “partial implementation” stage. Although teacher “buy-in” was not overwhelming for this model, it would have most likely improved in the second year of implementation as teachers became more familiar with the process. Instead, I made the decision, entering my first year as principal, to dramatically alter the master schedule; including the addition of a literacy block and a rotating cycle. Regardless of its merit, the change in leadership and scheduling practices was overwhelming for staff and resulted in a natural resistance to change. As a result, efforts to implement PALS and RT were limited by the strains of new practices and reduced planning time. I believe a slower

transition, with increased opportunities for teachers to provide input, would have resulted in better outcomes related to school-wide RTI and the use of PALS and RT.

Second, in addition to being limited by “buy-in” deficits, implementation of PALS and RT was also limited by a lack of monitoring and feedback. While plans were developed to guide professional development, little to no planning was dedicated to monitoring implementation. As is often the case “what gets monitored, gets done”, and thus failure to plan for monitoring represents a major oversight. While program evaluation provided opportunities for monitoring and walk-throughs were conducted, the administrative team never developed the type of systematic process needed to collect data and provide feedback to all staff about implementation in their classroom. Future efforts must include this element to ensure both that all teachers implement the program and that those struggling or resisting are identified and receive support.

Finally, I believe that my efforts failed to include collaboration with district staff and other principals. Although each building and its students have their own unique qualities, there are many similarities in the challenges we face. Collaboration would allow district and building leadership to identify effective programs, align resources, and communicate a shared message related to literacy. As an assistant principal and first year administrator, my thought process was not nearly as global as it has become today. At this stage of my career I feel ready to engage my district and building colleagues in this conversation to support improved practice at Gauger and across the school district.

Positive Takeaways

Despite the missed opportunities described above, efforts taken over the past three years have provided the Gauger with valuable experiences which will help in developing next steps. First, previous attempts to establish RTI have provided the administrative team with valuable insight into the process. The “pull-out” program that was utilized in 2011-2012 presented issues due to a lack of structure and resulted in lost instructional time from frequent transitioning. The school-wide model utilized in 2012-2013 was designed to provide the structure that was missing in the “pull-out” program and was successful in that regard. The rigid structure of scheduled interventions; however, eliminated flexibility entirely and locked student into interventions that may not have met their specific needs. Going forward, I would recommend that Gauger consider a model that includes the use of a “skinny” to provide the opportunity for the delivery of interventions. The “skinny”, if assigned by team, would provide the opportunity for the flexible grouping during intervention time. Students that do not require intervention could participate in enrichment activities (i.e. foreign language) allowing intervention classes to be more manageable in size.

Second, I believe that our continued efforts related to student efficacy and the growth mindset will be critical to our future efforts. Each year our efforts have expanded and mindset related activities are becoming part of “what we do” at Gauger.

For example, goal setting activities, initiated in 2011-2012, are now a part of our regular practice. This year we have expanded our effort to include a “Mindset Day” during which students participate in mindset activities in all content areas.

Additionally, students will participate in continuous “mini-activities” throughout the year and will be exposed to “mindset messages” during morning announcements. If Gauger were to include a “skinny”, mindset efforts could be expanded further without impacting normal instructional time.

Finally, efforts related to the case study (artifact # 3) have provided me with a framework to assist in problem solving. This framework encourages leaders to think about issues through the following lenses: (1) structural, (2) human resources, (3) political, and (4) symbolic. For artifact #3, this process was utilized to better understand implementation of Response to Intervention, but this process could easily be applied to any problem identified within the building. I believe that this process could be useful in planning for the development of a “skinny” and advisory time to support both RTI and enrichment.

Future Actions and Recommendations

At this point in time, Gauger has yet to establish a comprehensive school-wide literacy program. While important actions have taken place and several elements recommended by Biancarosa and Snow have been implemented, there is much work to be done. After expanding in 2012-2013, leadership decided to take a step back in 2013-2014 in response to decreased student performance and increased incidents of misbehavior. However, the determination to establish a school-wide literacy block

remains strong and I recommend the following actions to get back on track in the 2014-2015 school-year:

1. Increased Collaboration

As indicated earlier, failing to collaborate with district and building leadership at the start of the process was a missed opportunity. As I begin planning for the 2014-2015 school-year, I have an opportunity for redemption. In seeking to strengthen core literacy instruction, develop a systematic process for intervention, and expand literacy efforts to all content areas, I must remain open to feedback and new ideas. I believe that increased collaboration will assist me in the following:

- Identification of existing practices within Christina and surrounding districts that can be utilized at Gauger-Cobbs to address core literacy, delivery of interventions, and improved content area literacy. This collaboration can also include discussion and reflection with Gauger-Cobbs staff related to past efforts and future actions.
- Identification of creative ways to maximize resources; including staffing, funding, and other resources (i.e. technology). As was the case above, I must also remember to include the “experts” in my own building in this discussion.

2. Inclusion of “Skinny” in the 2014-2015 Master Schedule

Delivery of interventions for struggling students has proven to be the most challenging element based on previous efforts. It is also, in my opinion, the

most critical piece to establishing the “comprehensive and coordinated literacy program” described by Biancarosa and Snow. This determination is based on several experiences. First, the “pull-out” pilot utilized in 2011-2012 lacked the structure necessary for consistent implementation, resulting in inconsistent delivery of interventions and missed instructional time. Second, the school-wide literacy block lacked flexibility and forced all students, even those not in need of literacy support, to participate literacy based instruction. Finally, the 66 minutes dedicated to the school-wide literacy block was more time than required by PALS/RT and resulted in lost instructional time for all classes.

Inclusion of a “skinny”, recommended to be 30 minutes in length, could be created by removing roughly 7 minutes from each block. I believe that the “skinny” will support systematic delivery of interventions for the following reasons. First, it would provide a more appropriate amount of time, 30 minutes every other day for intervention, than did the school-wide literacy block (66 minutes/every other day). Second, the impact on instructional time for core and expressive arts classes would minimal compared to the 66 minutes sacrificed for the school-wide literacy block. Finally, this structure would provide a time during which students could be grouped flexibly for delivery of intervention, without interrupting core instruction.

3. Expand Literacy efforts to include Writing

Biancarosa and Snow identify “Intensive Writing” as one of their key elements, which they insist is not simply “more writing”, but rather writing

instruction with “clear objectives and expectations” that “consistently challenges students” regardless of ability, to engage with academic content at high levels of reasoning. To date writing has not been an emphasis of our literacy efforts, although the shift to the Common Core has resulted in an increased discussion related to writing. Increased writing is a critical part of Common Core implementation and will help to strengthen the core literacy program. In addition, writing activities can easily be integrated into content area activities for all classes, as a measure of comprehension for content reading assignments.

4. Increase the Focus on Formative Assessment

Another critical element of Biancarosa and Snow’s recommendations, formative assessment, has not been explicitly identified as a focus of literacy efforts. That said, formative assessment is a critical component of both core instruction and efforts to provide intervention. Past efforts to utilize formative assessment have utilized tools like Oral Reading Fluency to monitor progress, but effectiveness was limited by a lack of support and professional development. As we move forward, we must ensure that staff members responsible for providing interventions are well versed in the progress monitoring tools identified for use at Gauger.

If these recommendations are executed in preparation for the 2014-2015 school-year, I believe that Gauger will be well positioned to resume progress towards the goal of establishing a comprehensive literacy program.

Chapter 6

REFLECTION ON LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

This process of pursuing a doctoral degree in educational leadership began at the University of Central Florida. At the time I was 28 years old and serving as dean of students at Kissimmee Middle School. I believed that participation in the program would help me to land an assistant principal position, which I was finding difficult in a large school district. Shortly after enrolling, my frustration caused me to seek employment outside of my district and led to my hire with the Christina School District. Overwhelmed with the move and new responsibilities, I delayed my enrollment at the University of Delaware until my third year at Gauger. Having finally adjusted to my new role and life in Delaware, I felt ready to once again begin work towards my doctoral degree. Interestingly the goal of becoming an assistant principal had already been realized and it was now clear that the degree was not necessary for further advancement in the district. My decision to continue the work I started in Florida at the University of Delaware was now about personal and professional growth, rather than obtaining a better position within the organization. Nearly seven years from the beginning of this journey, it is safe to say that I have grown as both an individual and a professional.

My Growth as a Scholar

As I indicated above, my decision to enroll in the University of Delaware's Administration & Policy Leadership Program was to ensure my continued personal

and professional growth. As the son of truck driver, I find it difficult to think of myself as a “scholar” and consider my blue collar approach to pencil pushing the key to my success. That said, my work in the program has definitely resulted in growth in several areas associated with scholarship. First, I have become more reflective as the result of my work at the University of Delaware. While I have always been critical of myself, the practice of reflecting through a multiple frame approach, as utilized in the case study (artifact #3), is a new practice that was the direct result of my work in the program. Second, I have increased my ability to identify and examine research to support the decision making process. Prior to my engagement in the program, I recognized the need for decision-making to be evidence or research based, but did not have the skills necessary to separate high quality research from lesser quality research. Finally, I now have greater respect for the opinions of others as it relates to resolving issues within my school. At the start of the program, my view of collaboration tended to be that it was only valuable as a “means to an end” for gaining stakeholder buy-in. However, the process of discussing and reflecting on practice with members of my cohort, which was comprised of a variety of different educational perspectives, made me realize that I can have those same conversations with my staff.

My Growth as a Problem Solver

In the role of principal I am often presented with “problems” of varying magnitudes. While some can be resolved with relative ease, there are issues that exist within schools that are extremely complex. To further complicate matters, strained

resources often limit the options that schools have in responding to issues. In terms of my growth as a problem solver, there have been three key realizations during my time in the program. The first realization was that I must consider the problem from a variety of perspectives. As indicated above, the multiple frame approach used in the case study (artifact #3), provides a framework for thinking about problems through different lenses. This approach ensures that solutions not only address the original problem, but also that problem solving efforts do not create problems in other areas. The second realization was that my building was full of potential problems solvers. Prior to the program, I was less willing to engage staff in problem solving for fear that they would become frustrated if their ideas were not utilized. The reality is that staff will recognize good ideas, regardless of the source and that the likelihood of finding a solution increases greatly when soliciting input from more people. Also, involving a variety of stakeholders assists in capturing perspectives from multiple frames and reduces the likelihood of the decision resulting in unintended consequences. Finally, my involvement in the program has helped me to think about problems from a district level perspective. As indicated earlier, a next step for me is to engage district leadership and secondary principals in discussion around literacy instruction at the secondary level as a means to support improved practice at Gauger and the districts' secondary schools. I see now that this would have been an ideal starting point; however, I was not "there yet" as a problem solver.

My Growth as a Partner

As principal I have become “partner” to a variety of stakeholder groups in the Gauger-Cobbs community. Like it or not, my role requires that I work simultaneously to support the interests of students, teachers, parents, and community members. This can be challenging as the interest of different stakeholder groups are frequently in opposition. While I have always felt I was a strong “partner”, there is no question that my coursework and efforts to establish a comprehensive literacy program have produced growth in this area. One area of growth has been related to the thought and planning that goes into communications developed for staff, students, and families. The role of principal is inherently political and several of our classes addressed this issue. As a result, I have become more strategic in the delivery of messages to ensure that stakeholder groups feel valued. A second area of growth has been my increased ability to think about issues from multiple perspectives. This allows me to anticipate potential concerns and brainstorm potential responses if the need arises. Additionally, if push-back should occur, being able to demonstrate that you had given some thought to their perspective is comforting and helps to ensure the conversation remains positive. A final area of growth related to my role as a “partner” has been the realization that true collaboration is possible. As described above, I viewed collaboration as means of gathering support for my agenda, rather than an opportunity for others to truly participate. The experience of collaborating with a cohort on a weekly basis, along with increased confidence in my abilities, has allowed me to true collaboration with stakeholders.

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Appendix A

EDUCATION LEADERSHIP PORTFOLIO PROPOSAL

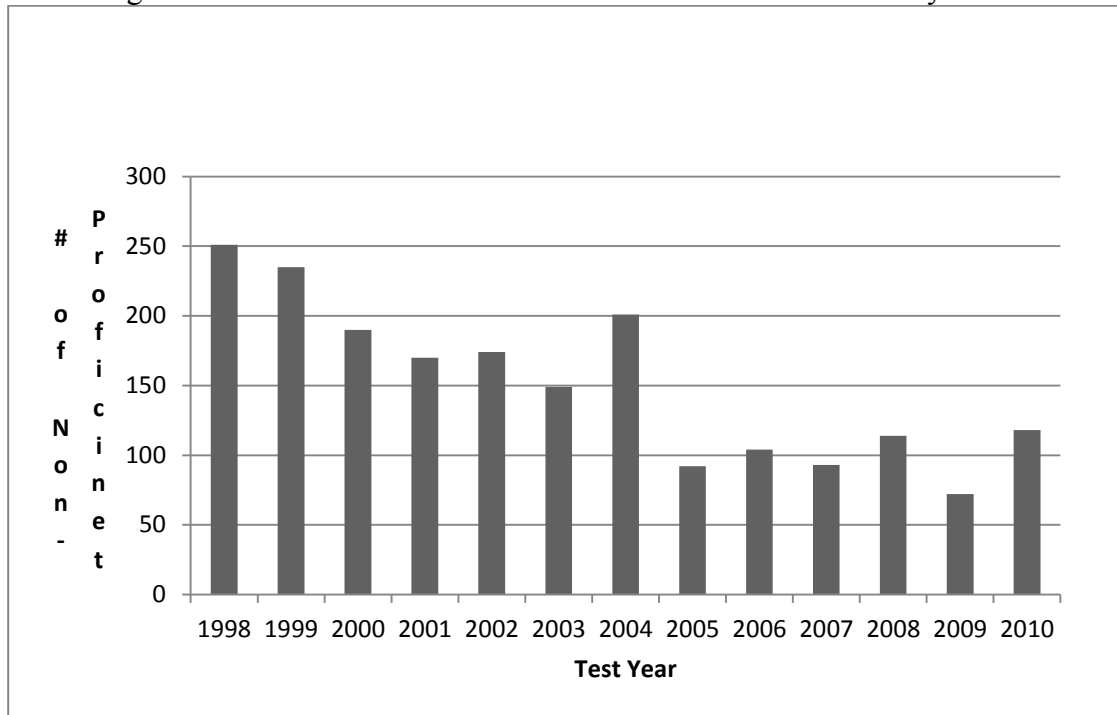
Overview:

This proposal for the Educational Leadership Portfolio details the actions I will take to facilitate school-wide implementation of a comprehensive literacy program at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School. This proposal will make clear the need for literacy instruction at Gauger-Cobbs, provide information about the context of the school, and outline recommendations for future action.

Problem Statement:

In recent years the administrative team at Gauger-Cobbs has often referenced the “little m” during conversations with staff about student achievement. The “little m” is an informal mission that highlights our responsibility to prepare Gauger students for high-school. That being said, each year a significant number of 8th grade students at Gauger score below proficient on the state reading assessment and enter high-school ill equipped for the challenges that lie ahead. To help frame the problem, Figure 1 displays the number of 8th grade students from 1998 to 2010 that scored below proficiency on the DSTP.

Figure 2 Number of Non-Proficient Students as Measured by DSTP



Although clear progress was made, scores flattened out around 2005, leaving nearly 100 students below proficiency each year. A review of this data suggests that many students are in fact not prepared for high-school, at least in terms of their literacy skills.

While this issue is clearly unacceptable, Gauger is not alone; in fact Gauger's literacy data is representative of a national trend at the secondary level. In a report from the Alliance for Excellent Education entitled *Reading Next: A Vision for Action Research in Middle and High-School Literacy*, authors Biancarosa & Snow report that an estimated 32% of high-school graduates are not prepared for college English composition courses and that 40% of high-school graduates do not have the literacy skills required by employers (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). To make matters worse NAEP data related to secondary literacy has been "flat" since NAEP's creation in the 1970's. Part of the issue is that efforts to improve literacy have often been focused at

the elementary level and curtail at the middle and high school level (Heller & Greenleaf, 2007). However, that is not to say that research does not exist to guide secondary leaders. In Biancarosa & Snow’s Reading Next article, referenced above, the authors provide “15 Key Elements” that can be utilized to build an effective secondary literacy program. These elements are organized into two categories, “Instruction” or “Infrastructure” (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Table 7 identifies each of the 15 elements supported by Biancarosa & Snow and the assigned category:

Table 7 : Key Elements of Effective Secondary Literacy Programs	
Instructional Improvements	Infrastructure Improvements
1. Direct, explicit comprehension instruction	9. Ongoing formative assessment
2. Effective instructional principals embedded in content	10. Extended time for literacy
3. Motivation and self-directed learning	11. Professional Development
4. Text-Based collaborative learning	12. Ongoing summative assessments of students and programs
5. Strategic Tutoring	13. Teacher teams
6. Diverse Text	14. Leadership
7. Intensive Writing	15. A comprehensive and coordinated literacy program
8. A technology component	

The authors acknowledge that all 15 elements are not necessary for a successful program, but emphasize that the incorporation of multiple elements will create a stronger program. In order to ensure that students are prepared for high school and beyond, Gauger-Cobbs must take action to address the literacy needs of students. Specifically, Gauger must implement a comprehensive literacy program, incorporating many of the elements recommended by Biancarosa & Snow.

Organizational Context:

Located in Newark, De, Gauger-Cobbs is one of 4 middle schools in the Christina School District. With a total of 26 traditional schools, the district is the largest in Delaware and services students in the city of Wilmington and surrounding suburbs. Enrollment in the district has steadily declined in recent years, dropping from nearly 20,000 in 2002 to just fewer than 17,000 in 2012. The district is home to a diverse student body summarized in Table 8 below:

Table 8 Christina School District Demographical Breakdown
(Based on 2011-2012 DOE School Profile Data)

African-America	40.8%
White	35%
Hispanic	17.5%
Asian	4.3%
Low-Income	59.8%
Special Education	14.8%
Second Language Learners	7.0%

Academically the district is “Below Target”, as it relates to AYP, and earned Delaware’s lowest rating of “Academic Watch”. The drop-out rate in 2010-2011 was 7.8%, compared to 5.6% in 2009-2010 and 10.3% in 2008-2009. Additionally, 11th grade SAT scores show that the district is lagging behind the state in both participation

(88% v. 93%) and achievement, with an average total score of 1,229 compared to 1,296 for the state.

Gauger-Cobbs Middle School is home to nearly 1,230 students in grades 6 through 8. Demographic data for Gauger, presented in Table 9 below, is comparable to that of the district.

Table 9 Gauger-Cobbs Middle School Demographical Breakdown
(Based on 2011-2012 DOE School Profile Data)

African-America	40.8%
White	39.5%
Hispanic	15.8%
Asian	3%
Low-Income	58.4%
Special Education	10.8%
Second Language Learners	2.8%

Gauger-Cobbs has a total of 86 instructional units including: 74 teachers, 1 librarian, and 11 pupil support units. The demographic breakdown for instructional staff is as follows: 73.1% White, 19.8% African American, and 1.2% American Indian. Additionally, Gauger's staff has a core group of experienced and well educated teachers, with 62.2% having greater than ten years of experience and 60.4% having earned a master's degree or higher.

As it relates to student achievement, Gauger-Cobbs failed to meet AYP for the 2011-2012 school-year, missing AYP targets for "Students with Disabilities" in both the original and growth model. Although targets were met in every other AYP cell, there are still clear literacy needs for many of Gauger's student subgroups. Table 10 displays the percentage of students that scored below proficiency on the 2011-2012 DCAS Reading assessment.

Table 10 Percent Below Proficiency by Sub-Group 2011-2012 DCAS Reading		
Test Grade	Sub-Group	Percent Below Proficiency
6	All Students	38.23
6	Hispanic	37.5
6	African American	45.33
6	White	32.33
6	Students with Disability	86.67
6	ELL	93.33
7	All Students	43.8
7	Hispanic	46.58
7	African American	54.25
7	White	34.13
7	Students with Disability	80.43
7	ELL	93.33
8	All Students	30.54
8	Hispanic	30.19
8	African American	35.68
8	White	25.77
8	Students with Disability	79.63
8	ELL	66.67

A review of the data in Table 10 makes clear that many of Gauger's student sub-groups are struggling, regardless of if AYP targets were met.

Organizational Role:

In the summer of 2008, I was hired by Christina School District to serve as Assistant Principal at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School. At that time, the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP) was the state assessment and literacy proficiency for 8th graders had been nearly 80% for several years. DSTP scores had improved steadily since the inauguration of the test in 1998, when just over 50% of 8th graders

earned proficiency. In 2010-2011, the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS), a more rigorous and computer-based state assessment, replaced DSTP. This same year I enrolled in the University of Delaware's Doctor of Educational Leadership program and began looking more closely at issues within the building.

This past summer, I was named Principal at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School and quickly established that addressing the literacy needs of Gauger's students would be our primary focus. In the summer letter, my first communication to staff, I outlined my plan for the 2012-2013 school year, which included the following: restructuring our master schedule allowing for scheduled time for literacy intervention and enrichment, providing ongoing professional development, and aligning resources to support a school-wide literacy program.

Context of literacy interventions at Gauger-Cobbs

As indicated above, I accepted an offer to become the assistant principal at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School in 2008 and immediately began attending brainstorming and training sessions related to implementing RTI at the secondary level. With implementation having already begun at the elementary level, these trainings were designed to help secondary schools as they prepared to comply with the impending state mandate for RTI at the secondary level. Despite these early planning opportunities, little progress was made and the vision for RTI at Gauger remained unclear as the 2010-2011 school year closed. During this period, literacy intervention was "expected" to occur within the ELA classroom during the additional time provided by the double-dose. Teachers were free to choose when intervention occurred and the resources utilized for intervention. Support and monitoring related to

interventions from the administrative team were minimal, and as a result it was difficult to ensure that interventions were in fact occurring and it was nearly impossible to ensure consistency school-wide.

Response to Intervention Pilot

In the summer leading up to the 2011-2012 school year central office began asking questions about Gauger's plan for RTI implementation. In response, Gauger proposed a 6th grade "pull-out" pilot to provide literacy interventions to tier 2 and tier 3 students. Students were identified using DCAS data collected through I-Tracker Pro. Generally speaking, students that scored a 1 on DCAS were placed into a tier 3 intervention (i.e. Read 180), while students that scored a 2 on DCAS were put into a "pull-out" group. These students were "pulled" from ELA class by an interventionist for 30 minutes every other day (Blue Days). Students scoring 3 or above remained in their classroom for enrichment, typically completing a writing or reading assignment that the "pull-out" students would not be expected to complete. A part-time RTI coordinator was hired to assist with the managing of resources, scheduling of interventions, documenting of interventions, and monitoring of implementation.

The selection of staff to provide literacy interventions occurred through two specific pathways. First, staff members who had gaps in their teaching assignment were assigned to RTI. With the exception of the Read 180 interventionist, no strategy was used in the scheduling process to ensure that teachers with gaps would be strong interventionists. In the second pathway, a teacher was pulled from a co-taught classroom to provide interventions to a "pull-out" group. In this instance the decision was more strategic, as the teacher with the greater knowledge of intervention was pulled to work with small groups.

In regards to professional development for interventionists, training was provided around the use of I-tracker Pro. These trainings were facilitated by the RTI coordinator and assisted interventionists with the creation and monitoring of intervention groups. As it relates to training for specific interventions, only Read 180 and Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) were supported with formal professional development for staff. Read 180 training was delivered through program representatives directly to the interventionist, while PALS training was delivered to all ELA teachers through two sessions. The first session was an overview of the PALS process, while the second session provided teachers with information related to creating PALS partnerships and training students on the PALS procedures. Training for the remaining interventions, Corrective Reading, Read Naturally Encore, and Targeted Reading Interventions (teacher created materials), was provided by the RTI coordinator on an individual or small group basis.

Interventions and Resources:

Aside from Targeted Reading Interventions, which were teacher created, the pilot program utilized the following interventions:

1. Read 180 (Tier 3)
 - A computer-based program, Read 180 is designed for students who are two or more grade levels behind in reading. The program is adaptive, with an instructional cycle that includes whole-group instruction, small-group rotations (including small group

instruction, instructional software, and modeled and independent reading) and a whole-group wrap-up.

2. PALS (Tier 2)

PALS is a collection of the following partnered reading strategies designed to improve fluency and comprehension:

- Partnered Reading w/Retell – Students alternate reading (5 minutes each) followed by 2 minutes of “Retelling” during which they alternate retelling events from the text.
- Paragraph Shrinking – Students alternate reading (5 minutes each) stopping after each paragraph to “shrink”; meaning they state the main idea in ten words or less.
- Prediction Relay – Again students alternate reading (5 minutes each), however before reading they make a prediction about what will happen, stopping after each paragraph to shrink and see if their prediction was correct.

PALS strictly adheres to the following format:

Time	Activity
5 minutes	Partner A reads
5 minutes	Partner B reads
2 minutes	Alternate retelling facts
5 minutes	Partner A paragraph shrinking
5 minutes	Partner B paragraph shrinking
5 minutes	Partner A prediction relay
5 minutes	Partner B prediction relay

3. Corrective Reading (Tier 3)

- Developed for students who are at least 1 grade level behind, “Corrective Reading” is a scripted program that contains lessons addressing decoding and comprehension skills. “Corrective Reading” can be delivered to whole-group or small groups effectively.

4. Read Naturally Encore (Tier 3)

- “Read Naturally Encore” is an intervention program based on teacher modeling, repeated reading, and progress monitoring. “Read Naturally” can also be used to address fluency and comprehension issues.

The management of resources related to these interventions was another aspect of the 6th grade pilot program. Resources for “Corrective Reading” and “Read Naturally Encore” were housed in the Teaching and Learning Suite (at Gauger) and distributed with the help of the RTI Coordinator. For PALS, the primary resource was books, of which Gauger had an adequate supply; however the use of the library for DCAS testing hampered the ability of students to check out books during test administrations. Technology capacity also impacted participation in the Read 180 intervention program. Only one lab was dedicated solely to Read 180, with one other available one block every other day. This greatly limited the amount of students that could receive the intervention.

RTI Core Team

Composed of the RTI coordinator, interventionists, school psychologist, and a building administrator, the RTI Core team met monthly to support implementation. Although agenda items were different from meeting to meeting, common topics were: identifying students, use of I-tracker, progress monitoring, and materials/resources needed. Comprised of more than 15 members, the team struggled to reach consensus on issues and lacked clearly defined roles for team members. As a result, few decisions were made and agenda items were rarely seen through to the next meeting.

Teacher Feedback

On April 24th, 2012 an RTI Panel Session was held to allow the teachers involved in RTI to share their experiences and to engage the whole staff in a conversation about school-wide implementation. With the meeting facilitated by our instructional coach and master teacher, I was more than curious to hear feedback related to the pilot, as well as thoughts about next steps. During the session the following themes emerged regarding the pilot:

- Transitioning students from their classroom to the RTI location (another classroom) was time consuming and reduced the amount of time for intervention.
- Efforts to complete the intervention often resulted in students returning to their scheduled block late, resulting in missed instruction.

- There was a need for a structured program to support students that were in need of literacy enrichment.

In addition, the ELA department expressed concern about “lost-time” and their inability to continue some of their previous practices, such as Sustained Silent Reading (SSR). This feedback was followed by a brainstorming session to develop ideas related to how RTI should or could look in the upcoming school-year. From this discussion emerged three potential solutions, each of which contained their own set of pro’s and con’s. The first idea was simply to expand the pull-out effort to 7th and 8th grade, using our 2011-2012 experiences to improve the process. The second idea was to add a 45 minute “skinny” to Blue day, to allow for intervention and eliminate the need for pull-out. The third and final suggestion was to mimic a 5-block A/B rotating schedule, currently used at another district middle school, Shue-Medill, which would allow interventions to be scheduled throughout the day; maximizing resources and technology.

Current Literacy Efforts (2012-2013)

Efforts to establish a school-wide literacy program are underway at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School, with several important changes implemented for the 2012-2013 school-year. The following is a description of these efforts, categorized as instructional and infrastructure, as described by Biancarosa & Snow:

Instructional Elements

Efforts related to this element have been largely focused in two areas. First, literacy intervention teachers have received ongoing professional development in the use of Peer Assisted Learning Strategies or PALS. PALS, as mentioned earlier, is a

partnered reading strategy, proven through research to improve both fluency and comprehension. Second, literacy enrichment teachers have received similar support around the use of Reciprocal Teaching (RT); a collaborative strategy that builds skills related to questioning, clarifying, predicting, and summarizing. Both of these efforts meet aspects of the criteria established by Biancarosa & Snow for “Direct, Explicit Comprehension Instruction” (Reciprocal Teaching even is cited as an example by the authors) and for “Text-Based Collaborative Learning”.

In addition to PALS and RT, select students also receive support through the use of Read 180, System 44, and Achieve 3000, each of which can be described as computer based interventions. Read 180 and System 44 have been utilized at Gauger; however, adjustments to Gauger’s master schedule have increased capacity to expose students to these programs and the amount of time students can be engaged in each. Also Gauger is piloting the use of Achieve 3000, a program that provides teachers and students access to leveled informational text and tools to monitor improvements in comprehension. These initiatives fit with Heller and Greenleaf’s call for a technology component for an effective secondary literacy program.

Infrastructure Elements:

Biancarosa & Snow describe ongoing formative assessment as an “informal and frequent” means of tracking student progress. To date, Gauger has implemented the use of Oral Reading Fluency, Curriculum Bases Measures (MAZE), and the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) to monitor progress for literacy intervention students. Relatively new, increasing the consistency and frequency of these assessments is a priority.

Additionally, as described above, ongoing professional development has been utilized to support the implementation of PALS and Reciprocal Teaching. In the case of PALS, the strategy was introduced school-wide at the start of the 2011-2012 school-year and has since been supported through the work in large group PLC's. For RT, the program was launched at the start of the 2012-2013 school-year with the support of Dr. Bonnie Albertson from the University of Delaware. Since the launch, Dr. Albertson has continued to support efforts through large group PLC's, which have focused on helping teachers support student growth related to each of the skills required by RT. Also, large group PLC's have been utilized to support the use of formative assessment tools (ORF and CBM Maze) and progress monitoring through the Data Service Center.

Improvement Goal:

Although the “little m” speaks to exiting 8th grade students, addressing literacy concerns at Gauger will require a school-wide approach across all grade levels. During my time at Gauger, a number of efforts have been initiated, as discussed above. Several of these are consistent with Biancarosa & Snow's recommended components for secondary literacy programs. In spite of efforts, there is still a need as proficiency rates in Table 4 illustrate. Further, many of Biancarosa & Snow's recommended components are not yet implemented or addressed in current efforts. With that in mind, my organizational improvement goal is to establish a school-wide literacy program, including both intervention and enrichment opportunities at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School. In this pursuit, the “15 Elements” described by Biancarosa & Snow will serve as a guide for the development of the program.

To date, I have worked on several artifacts as part of this improvement project at Gauger-Cobbs. Table 11 summarizes the efforts to date.

Table 11 Description of Artifacts for Review			
Artifact	Type	Audience	Status
Instructional Support Plan – Implementation of PALS	Product	Leadership Team	Completed: May Need revision
Program Evaluation: PALS Implementation	Empirical Analysis	Leadership Team	Completed: May Need revision
Case Study: RTI Implementation at Gauger-Cobbs	Account	Myself	Completed: May Need revision
Literacy E-Book.	Product	Teachers	Revision Needed

Artifact # 1: Instructional Support Plan – Implementation of Peer Assisted Learning Strategies.

Developed for the Gauger-Cobbs leadership team in the spring of the 2010-2011 school-year, this artifact guided the initial implementation of Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) for the 2011-2012 school year. The document included a review of Gauger’s demographics, literacy data, core curriculum, and literacy resources. Additionally the document offered recommendations for the delivery of professional development and monitoring of implementation. This work aligns to Biancarosa & Snow’s recommendation for “Direct, explicit comprehension instruction” and “Professional Development”. Though the use of PALS has evolved at Gauger since 2011-2012, this artifact was particularly important, as it guided my first significant actions to develop a comprehensive school-wide literacy program at Gauger.

Artifact # 2 Program Evaluation: PALS Implementation 2011-2012

This artifact was developed to evaluate the fidelity of PALS implementation and the impact of implementation on student achievement. Conducted in the fall of 2011, the evaluation measured implementation fidelity against an evaluator created rubric and examined R.A.R.E response data to determine the impact of PALS on student achievement. Provided that the evaluation occurred early in the implementation cycle, it most closely aligned with the “Ongoing formative assessment” recommended by Biancarosa & Snow. This artifact was also beneficial because, it helped the administrative team to identify professional development needs.

Artifact # 3 Case Study: RTI Implementation at Gauger-Cobbs.

Written as an account of Gauger’s increased literacy efforts in the 2011-2012 school-year, the case study reflects specifically on implementation of Gauger’s literacy intervention pilot. The pilot intervention program was delivered to 6th grade students as a means of planning for school-wide implementation. As the author and audience, this artifact was particularly beneficial because it examined implementation through the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic frames. This multi-frame reflection culminated in recommendations for school-wide implementation of RTI, including restructuring the master schedule, development of a literacy intervention handbook to support expansion, and providing enrichment opportunities. The reflection was helpful in determining next steps needed to move Gauger toward the “comprehensive and coordinated literacy program” envisioned by Biancarosa & Snow.

Artifact # 4 Literacy E-Book

Envisioned as a support for teachers of both literacy intervention and enrichment, this artifact would include the following: a brief overview of research related to literacy at the secondary level, a brief review of Gauger's recent literacy data, a vision and mission for Gauger's literacy program, professional development materials for both PALS and Reciprocal Teaching, and tutorials to assist with documenting interventions through I-Tracker Pro. The document will be available through SharePoint, a new edition to the Gauger server that can be accessed by all teachers in the building. In addition to being a useful tool, the document will also be symbolic of the new and "coordinated literacy program" at Gauger. Moving forward, I propose five additional artifacts to support my improvement goal. These are captured in Table 12 and summarized below.

Table 12 Description of Proposed Events:			
Artifact	Type	Audience	Status
Literature Review: Secondary Literacy Instruction.	Account	Leadership Team/Faculty	Proposed
Program Evaluation: Literacy Program	Empirical Analysis	Leadership Team	Proposed
Action Plan: Master Schedule and Resources Allocation	Account	Leadership Team	Proposed
Instructional Support Plan: Literacy Instruction in the Content Areas.	Product/Tool	Leadership Team	Proposed
Reflection: Creating a Culture of Student Efficacy	Account	Leadership Team	Proposed

Artifact # 5 Literature Review: Secondary Literacy Instruction

Leadership is one of the 15 key elements described by Biancarosa & Snow. In fact, they go as far to say, “without someone with an informed vision of what good literacy instruction entails leading the charge, instructional change is likely to be beset with problems”. As the building leader, I am the primary audience for this artifact and believe that it would be greatly beneficial in planning for the upcoming school-year. The expanded knowledge of best practice gained from this exercise would help me to evaluate current efforts and identify additional practices that may be beneficial for Gauger. In addition, this exercise will no doubt prove beneficial as I work to complete my proposed artifacts. Specifically, I see the literature review greatly supporting my efforts around literacy in the content areas (Artifact # 8) and motivating students (Artifact #9). In each case, knowledge of research and best practice from a secondary lens will be critical to the value of the artifact.

Artifact # 6 Literacy Program Evaluation: Literacy Program

Proposed to assist the administrative team in evaluating both the fidelity of implementation and effectiveness of Reciprocal Teaching and PALS, this artifact will be helpful for the following reasons. First, it will provide the team with a means of measuring implementation fidelity around PALS and Reciprocal Teaching; identifying teachers that are either passively defiant, or in need of additional support and professional development. Second, analysis data from the SRI and DCAS will help the team identify the impact of these efforts on student achievement. It will be particularly interesting to draw comparisons between classrooms with high implementation fidelity

and those with lower fidelity. This artifact is also in alignment with Biancarosa & Snow's recommendation for "Ongoing Summative Assessment of Student Programs".

Artifact # 7 Action Plan- Master Schedule & Human Resource Allocation

Two additional elements identified by Biancarosa & Snow are "Teacher Teams" and "Extended Time for Literacy". In their discussion about teams of teachers, the authors highlight the importance of "student cohorts" and the opportunity for teachers to have conversations around shared students. Prior to the 2012-2013 school-year "teaming" was a cornerstone of Gauger's academic program, but was sacrificed to allow for more flexibility in the master schedule. In terms of extending time, the authors point out that literacy instruction must be embedded throughout the school day to be truly impactful, not just during a literacy block or ELA class. That being said, the purpose of this artifact would be two fold and would support planning for the 2013-2014 school-year. First, the reflection would seek to identify a way to include the entire staff in some aspect of the literacy intervention program. Currently, our expressive arts and 509 teachers are not included because of scheduling conflicts. Second, I would like to see if teaming could be supported within our current master schedule. Together, these efforts would greatly support the embedding of literacy strategies school-wide and assist teachers in planning across content areas to support the efforts described in artifact # 8.

Artifact # 8 Professional Development Plan: Literacy Instruction in the Content Areas

As discussed in Artifact #8, a literacy program must extend beyond the literacy block or ELA classroom. Although am I am hopeful that my efforts to improve the master schedule will help to support this process, I also believe that professional development is needed to support this effort. As a result, this artifact will outline professional development and monitoring efforts for the 2013-2014 school-year around expanding our literacy efforts into all content areas.

Artifact # 9 Reflection: Creating a Culture of Student Efficacy

In addition to efforts to improve teacher practice, Biancarosa & Snow acknowledge the need for “Motivation and Self Directed Learning” on behalf of students. To foster this self-direction, Biancarosa & Snow make several suggestions, including: providing students with independent reading time, allowing students to select articles or texts themselves, and selection of articles that are relevant to students. Although I see value in these strategies, I believe that many of our students have experienced failure for so long that they have given up the hope that they can become a strong reader. In my opinion, the first step to empowering these students is to reaffirm their belief in themselves. With that in mind, our Vision 2015 team has selected “creating a culture of student efficacy” as our focus area for the 2012-2013 school year and has planned the following for the 2012-2013 school-year:

- Pre/Post Growth Mindset Survey of Students, Parents, & Staff.

- Continued Professional Development for Staff related to growth mindset statements.
- Introduction of Growth Mindset and “brain science” to students through the literacy block.
- Student Goal Setting activities – Similar to last year, but with expanded efforts around helping students identify strategies to help them reach their goals.

The hope of the Vision 2015 team is that exposure to “brain science” and the growth mindset work of Carol Dweck will help students make the connection between effort and academic growth. This realization would be beneficial in all content areas for students. Reflecting on these activities will allow me to determine if our current efforts around student motivation are worth expanding, or if another course of action is needed.

Summary and Timeline:

Implementing an effective school-wide literacy program is a task that has proven to be difficult at the secondary level. However, literacy data at Gauger, and across the nation, make clear the need for such efforts. My work through the University of Delaware, primarily artifacts 1 through 3, has shaped Gauger’s early efforts to establish such a program. There is still much work to be done and I believe that completion of the proposed artifacts will influence the future of Gauger’s literacy program to an even greater extent.

I realize that improvement efforts will take time; however, I also have a sense of urgency related to improved instruction, knowing the impact it could have for Gauger students. As a result, I intend to complete the proposed artifacts by May of 2013. This will allow me to utilize any knowledge or insights gained as I plan for the 2013-2014 school year.

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Appendix B

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR PALS

Introduction

Adolescent literacy is a well-documented problem facing educators and policy makers in the United States. It is estimated that 32% of high-school graduates are not prepared for college English composition courses and additionally that 40% of high-school graduates do not have the literacy skills required by employers (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Recent DSTP and DCAS data confirm that many students at Gauger-Cobbs struggle with literacy, and will likely continue their struggles into high school.

Although reading or literacy instruction has typically been overlooked at the secondary level, a strong body of research exists to guide educators. One practice, supported by research, is the use of Peer Assisted Learning Strategies or PALS as a support for struggling readers at the secondary level. PALS is a collection of partnered reading strategies designed to improve fluency, identification of subject/main idea, and comprehension. The process is highly structured and requires 32 minutes per session. This purpose of this project is as follows: (1) to use data to identify Tier 1 literacy instruction as an area in need of improvement at Gauger-Cobbs, (2) to identify research to support the implementation of PALS at Gauger-Cobbs, (3) to detail a system for assessment related to literacy, and (4) to outline a professional support plan for PALS implementation.

School Description

Gauger-Cobbs Middle School, located in Newark, De, is home to a diverse student body totaling 1260 students. This total includes 439 6th grade students, 422 7th grade students, and 398 8th grade students. The racial/ethnic breakdown of these students is as follows: American Indian (.1%), African-American (41.1%), Asian

American (4.0%), Hawaiian (.2%), Hispanic (14.3%), White (40.2%) and Multi-Racial (.2%). Additionally, of the 1260 students enrolled in fall 2010:

- 14.3% were receiving Special Education Services
- 1.7% were identified as ELL
- 53% were identified as Low-Income

Gauger-Cobbs has a total of 68 teacher units with a racial/ethnic composition of 17.6% African American and 82.4% White. Teacher experience, by number and percent, is summarized in Table 13 below.

Table 13 Teacher Experience Level		
Experience Range	Number of Teachers	% of Teachers
4 years or Less	11	16.2
5-9 Years	13	19.1
10-14 Years	18	26.5
15-19 Years	13	19.1
20-24 Years	3	4.4
25-29 Years	4	5.9
30 Years or More	6	8.8
Total	68	100

In addition to years of service, Table 14 summarizes the level of educational attainment of teachers by number and percent.

Table 14 Teacher Level of Educational Attainment		
Education Level	Number of Teachers	% of Teachers
Below Bach	1	1.5
Bachelor	18	26.5
Bach Plus 15	3	4.4
Bach Plus 30	7	10.3
Master	21	30.9
Master Plus 15	9	13.2
Master Plus 30	4	5.9
Master Plus 45	5	7.4
Doctorate	0	0
Total	68	100

According to Table 13, 35.3 % of teachers at Gauger-Cobbs have less than 10 years of teaching experience, while 19.1 % have more than 20 years of experience. The majority of teachers at Gauger-Cobbs fall in between, with 45.6% of teachers having between 10-20 years of teaching experience. Table. 2 indicates that 72.1% of Gauger staff have at least a Bachelors plus 15 as their educational level. Together, Table 1 and 2 indicate that the staff at Gauger-Cobbs is both experienced and well educated, at least in terms of degrees and credits earned. However, depending on the focus of their post-graduate course work, Table 1 could be reflective of a staff that is far removed from their teacher preparation courses and in need of professional development related to current instructional practices.

In recent years, administrators and teacher leaders at Gauger-Cobbs have worked diligently to focus the efforts our staff. The work of our Vision 2015 Team, comprising both administrators and teachers has led to the development of the following School-Wide Instructional Focus:

“Through a school-wide effort, all Gauger-Cobbs Middle School students will use evidence based strategies to learn, apply, and convey their understanding of

content. Student growth will be measured by improved scores on: DCAS and curriculum based assessments.” “Knowledge: Learn It, Use It, Share It!”

This instructional focus sets the tone for staff, emphasizing the use of evidence based strategies and both state and curriculum based assessments to measure growth. The instructional focus is present in each classroom and utilized to communicate the essential question (Learn it), the class activity or homework (Use it), and the collaborative/discussion activity (Share it) each day. Additionally, the instructional focus is: posted throughout the building, included in the student agenda, included in letters/newsletters sent home, reviewed at school events, reviewed on morning announcements, and printed on school lanyards and post-it notes. Although relatively new to Gauger-Cobbs, the instructional focus has provided us with a singular statement to focus both teachers and students on academics.

For the majority of 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students at Gauger-Cobbs, literacy instruction and literacy related interventions are delivered through the English Language Arts Curriculum. The majority of these classes met each day for 84 minutes and had an average class size of 28 students. We refer to these courses as a “double-dose” because students meet every day for 84 minutes. Students enrolled in Avid (Advancement via Individual Determination) receive a “single-dose” of ELA, meaning that they meet every other day for 84 minutes, resulting in less time for completion of the ELA curriculum. The intent of the double-dose is to provide teachers with the time necessary for intervention or enrichment during the students’ regularly scheduled class time. To aid in instruction, teachers are provided with the following materials/resources:

- Holt McDougal *Language of Literature* curriculum materials. The series includes a student anthology, student InterActive Readers, video/audio libraries and resource books to assist with grammar, vocabulary, writing, and reading skills.
- Daily Oral Language (DOL) – daily oral grammar and usage practice
- Trade books in a variety of genres
- SSR libraries
- Media Carts equipped with document readers and projectors
- SmartBoards
- Biweekly Scholastic Scope subscription

Teachers are not provided with explicit directions on when and how to utilize these materials, but rather work collaboratively to review student data and develop lessons targeting areas of weakness.

A variety of grouping strategies are employed to create collaborative groups within individual classrooms, but the most common pairings identified were: low with med-low, med-low with medium, med with high-low, and/or, high-low with high. This does not mean that students on the low end and high end never work together, but rather that it does not occur as frequently. The determination of low, medium, and

high is based on DCAS test scores and classroom indicators, such as the results of formative and summative assessments.

In addition to the ELA curriculum and teacher developed interventions provided in the double-dose, Gauger-Cobbs offers 9 sections of single-dose Read 180. Five of these sections serve our “specialized support” team students and meet every other day for 84 minutes. The average class size for these sections is 6.2 students. There are also 4 additional sections of Read 180 for students not identified as “specialized support”. These classes are semester courses and meet every other day for 84 minutes. The average class size is 10.5 and students are identified through teacher recommendation and DSTP/DCAS test scores. Before beginning Read 180, students complete the SRI test to ensure that their placement in the course is appropriate.

At the building level support is provided to teachers through professional learning communities (PLC’s), instructional coaching, and support from administrators. PLC’s are comprised of content specific, grade level groupings that meet 2-3 times weekly. Meetings are 45 minutes in length and provide teachers the opportunity to plan activities, design common assessments, participate in professional development, review assessment data, and conduct peer visits. Each PLC maintains a “collaborative binder” which contains notes from each meeting, sample activities/assessments, and data from common assessments. These binders are collected and reviewed by administrators quarterly, and feedback is provided utilizing a rubric. In addition to PLC’s, teachers at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School receive support in the form of instructional coaching. In most cases support from the instructional coach is provided through PLC’s. Unfortunately, the instructional coach spends a great deal of time in other buildings working to support district-related

professional development, limiting her ability to support teachers in our building. To further support teachers, Gauger-Cobbs has 3 building level administrators; 1 principal and 2 assistant principals. Each teacher is assigned to an administrator for the purposes of DPAS II, a process that ensures teachers have opportunities to meet with an administrator to set goals, and participate in formative and summative assessments. These interactions provide teachers and administrators the chance to have conversations about teaching and learning. Additionally, school administrators conduct walk-throughs and provide feedback to teachers based on these brief non-evaluative observations. Teacher support from the district is limited to instructional/curriculum coaching, district wide professional development, and teacher mentoring. Although instructional/curriculum coaching has great potential as a support to teachers, the multiple roles described above limit its effectiveness. However, it is common for these individuals to visit PLC's for professional development or updates related to curriculum. Additional support for teachers is provided by the district on designated professional development days. Offerings during these sessions tend to be content specific or program specific. In addition, new teachers receive support through a district facilitated mentoring program, which they participate throughout their first three years of employment.

Assessment-Based Concern

Gauger-Cobbs current AYP Status is Below Target and the current school rating is Academic Progress. Table. 15 shows 2008, 2009, and 2010 Reading DSTP results (Note: There were no 6th grade students enrolled at Gauger-Cobbs for 2008-2009 school year).

Table 15 Review of DSTP Reading Results					
Measure	Grade	# Tested	Mean	Reading StDev	% Meets or Exceeds Standard
Spring 2009 RMW	Grade 6	337	485.22	30.55	80.12
Spring 2010 RMW	Grade 6	422	479.49	31.98	74.88
Spring 2008 RMW	Grade 7	421	490.06	32	79.1
Spring 2009 RMW	Grade 7	353	492.69	30.11	81.59
Spring 2010 RMW	Grade 7	367	494.77	32.88	81.74
Spring 2008 RMW	Grade 8	421	513.48	30.32	72.68
Spring 2009 RMW	Grade 8	380	521.53	31.94	81.05
Spring 2010 RMW	Grade 8	368	514	32.83	74.73

In terms of DCAS Reading, 36% of 6th grade students, 39% of 7th grade students, and 38% of 8th grade students were proficient for the Fall Window (10-11). In the winter window 39% of 6th grade students, 48% of 7th grade students, and 44% of 8th grade students met proficiency. Assuming growth from winter to spring is similar to growth from fall to winter, AYP targets are unlikely to be met and proficiency levels will be lower than the previous year. Although, it is difficult to draw conclusions from comparisons of DCAS data and last year's DSTP data, a review of the data suggest that far too many students are unable to meet proficiency standards.

A close look at 2009-2010 DSTP data, displayed below in Table. 16, reveals that multiple student subgroups failed to meet AYP targets in both the original and growth model,

Table 16 AYP Subgroup Data				
	Original Model		Growth Model	
	# of Cells Missed	# of Cells Made	# of Cells Missed	# of Cells Made
Math	4	4	1	7
Reading	6	2	5	3

Although the data from the original model is concerning, the fact that 5 cells failed to meet growth targets in ELA suggests that not only are many students not proficient, they are not making significant progress towards proficiency. Also, when compared to the Math Growth Model, it is clear that students are underperforming on the ELA assessment. Table 17 displays the specific cells that failed to reach growth targets for the 2009-2010 DSTP Reading test administration and, although there may be some overlap, represents a diverse population of students failing to meet proficiency.

Table 17 Growth Model Results ELA (2009-10)		
African American	225	237
Hispanic	224	237
English Language Learner	171	237
Special Education	120	237
Low Income	224	237

Considering 41.4% of Gauger-Cobbs students are African-American, 13.3% are Hispanic, 5.6% are English Language Learners, 9.1% are Special Education, and 55.9% are identified as Low Income, there is evidence to suggest that current Tier I literacy instruction at Gauger-Cobbs is in need of improvement.

Although, there is a need to improve Tier 1 instruction for all grade levels, initial efforts to improve Tier I instruction will begin with 7th grade students, primarily because of the strength of the 7th grade ELA PLC, which support these students. Table 18 compares 2008, 2009, and 2010 DSTP Reading results for Gauger-Cobbs 7th grade students compared to district scores.

Table 18 DSTP Reading Instructional Scale Score						
	Gauger 2008	Christina 2008	Gauger 2009	Christina 2009	Gauger 2010	Christina 2010
Reading Number	421	1,233	353	1,125	367	1,260
Reading Average	490.06	487.40	492.69	488.56	494.77	485.53
Reading StDev	32	34.18	30.11	32.53	32.88	36.88
Reading % Meets or Exceeds	79.10	76.24	81.59	77.42	81.74	72.94

Although Gauger-Cobbs 7th graders consistently outperform the district average, 20.9 % were not proficient in 2008, compared to 18.41 % in 2009 and 27.06% in 2010. Additionally, only 48% of 7th grade students met proficiency for reading during the winter DCAS window.

PALS implementation will begin with the 7th grade ELA professional learning community. This PLC is comprised six teachers, four of whom are regular education teachers and two of whom serve as special educators in a co-teaching model. As a whole, this PLC functions at a consistently high level and its selection will ensure that changes are implemented with fidelity. As an added bonus, this PLC contains individuals with both formal and informal influence within the school (Stoelinga, 2008). Specifically, it contains the ELA department chair, a PBS team member, a

Vision 2015 team member, and a member of an exclusive after-school social group. As implementation expands beyond the 7th grade PLC, these formal and informal influences will be an asset.

In the current model, two key components comprise Tier 1 literacy instruction for 7th grade students. On Blue days instructional efforts are strictly focused on introducing students to the ELA curriculum. On Gold days, instructional time is dedicated to a blend of Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), which takes place for 45 minutes, and enrichment or remedial activities. There is no formal set of enrichment or remedial resources, but rather these activities are developed through the PLC. Some general areas of focus include reading strategies, vocabulary building, and note taking. One additional component is the R.A.R.E response rubric, which is utilized in a variety of ways to support both curriculum related activities/assessments and remedial/enrichment activities.

Although our current model has its strengths, there is also clear room for improvement. In a recent document entitled “Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy” Biancarosa & Snow (2006) detail 15 elements that have the potential to improve literacy achievement at the secondary level. One of the “elements” recommended by authors is “Text-Based Collaborative Learning” and although not mentioned specifically, PALS meets the author’s criteria in that it allows student the opportunities to “interact with each other around a text”.

Research-Based Response

To improve Tier 1 literacy instruction Gauger-Cobbs will implement Peer Assisted Learning Strategies in place of Sustained Silent Reading (SSR). Peer Assisted Learning Strategies, more commonly referred to as PALS, has a growing

body of research to support effectiveness at the middle school level. In one study, Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L., Mathes, P., & Simmons, D. (1996) implemented PALS across 12 elementary and 12 middle schools, with the following student groups: “low achievers with learning disabilities”, “low achievers without learning disabilities”, and “learners of average achievement”. In all cases, a total of 40 classrooms, students that participated in PALS, outperformed students in the control group, as measured by the Comprehensive Reading Assessment Battery. Another study, based on the work of Fuchs, Sporer and Brunstein (2009), implemented PALS with 7th grade students in Germany. In all, 8 classes, totaling 186 students, participated in the study as members of the treatment or control group. According to posttest results, students that participated in PALS scored higher on “experimenter-constructed” and standardized test questions, displayed higher achievement on “declarative and procedural measures of summarizing strategies” and more greatly improved in self-regulated activities.

PALS implementation, described below, will follow the model described by Fuchs and others (1996) with only minor adaptations. PALS will meet every Blue Day for 35 minutes, replacing SSR, and will strictly adhere to the procedures described below. In contrast to SSR, during which time students read individually, PALS organizes students into pairs based on their reading ability. Once pairs have been formed, the teacher will provide explicit instruction related to the following reading strategies: Partner Reading, Paragraph Shrinking, and Prediction Relay. Once learned, these strategies will be utilized by student pairings during each PALS session (Sporer & Brunstein, 2009).

Student pairings for PALS will be determined by rank ordering students according to their Lexile score. Once ranked, the class will be split in half and readers

from the top half will be paired with readers from the bottom half as follows. The top reader from the top half will be paired with the top reader from the bottom half, and then the second reader from the top half will be paired with the second reader from the bottom half. This pattern is repeated until all students are paired. Student pairings will be maintained for 4 weeks before being reset by the classroom teacher.

“Partner Reading with Retell” is the first of three peer assisted strategies that student pairings will complete. The focus of this strategy is the development of oral reading fluency. To begin, the stronger reader reads aloud to his partner for five minutes, with the weaker reader serving as the tutor. During the readings, tutors assist the reader with word recognition errors; including reading the wrong word, omitting a word, adding a word, and pausing for longer than 4 seconds. After 5 minutes, the reader “retells” the events of their reading, with the tutor asking prompting questions, such as “What did you learn first?” and “What did you learn next?”. Partners then switch roles and the weaker reader reads for five minutes, picking up where the stronger student left off and completing the “retell” once complete. A total of 15 minutes should be allocated for partner reading; allowing both readers 5 minutes for read aloud and 2 minutes for “retell”.

“Paragraph Summary”, the second peer assisted strategy, focuses on summarization and main idea identification skills. Beginning with the stronger reader, students alternate reading one paragraph at a time. After each paragraph, the reader identifies the subject and main idea. Tutors assist by asking the following scripted questions: “Who or what was the paragraph mainly about?” and “What was the most important thing you learned in the paragraph?” If students are unable to respond correctly, the tutor will direct them first by saying, “Try again”. A second attempt is

prompted by directing the reader “Read the paragraph silently and try again”; if the reader is still incorrect, the tutor will tell the reader the answer. During the first 4 weeks of PALS, paragraph summary should be conducted for 20 minutes; however, after week 4 it should be reduced to 10 minutes to allow for the introduction of “Prediction Relay”.

“Prediction Relay”, the third peer assisted strategy utilized by PALS, is not introduced until the fifth week of PALS, allowing students to develop a level of comfort with PALS procedures, summarizing, and identifying the main idea. During prediction relay, the higher reader predicts what is going to happen on the next page and then reads aloud to confirm or deny their prediction. This process continues for five minutes, before partners switch roles. Tutors are responsible for correcting word recognition errors.

A critical aspect of PALS implementation will be the frequency of monitoring visits made by school administrators, and the quality of feedback provided from these visits. Specific details related to monitoring and feedback of PALS implementation is discussed in the professional development section of the plan.

Assessment-Based Evaluation

Assessment will be a critical part of PALS implementation and will help decision makers at the school level evaluate the success of the program once implementation is complete. Included in the plan are assessments for screening students, for progress monitoring, and for measuring outcomes.

Since all 7th grade students will participate in Tier One instruction there is no need for a true screener; however, the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) will be utilized like a screener to identify a Lexile score for each student. These Lexile scores

will be necessary for teachers to create the reciprocal student pairings required by PALS. Given the strain on Gauger technology as a result of DCAS testing and Tech-Literacy requirements, the SRI must be administered through pencil and paper. ELA teachers will be responsible for administering and scoring each inventory, which will be scored via scan-tron. To manage the data gathered through the SRI, teachers will input scores into an excel spreadsheet, created and circulated by school administrators. Students that arrive after this initial administration would be given the SRI immediately by their ELA teacher and their score would be added to the spreadsheet. Once SRI data is compiled in Excel it can be sorted to help teachers identify student pairings and monitor progress.

Data from the SRI and DCAS will be utilized to monitor student progress. Both the SRI and DCAS will be administered to students three times during the school year. The SRI will be administered in early September, December, and April providing two opportunities for teachers to assess student growth. After each administration, teachers will have to input the new SRI data into the Excel spreadsheet so adjustments can be made to student pairings based on student growth and so data can be easily sorted to identify trends. In addition to the SRI, DCAS testing will also occur in the fall, winter, and spring, providing teachers with additional data that can be utilized to evaluate student growth and the impact of their instruction. Specifically, teachers can generate reports that:

- Contain individual students instructional and accountability scores.
- Compare classroom growth to growth at the District and State levels.

- Display classroom performance by Reporting Category. For example scores for an ELA classroom would be reported in the following categories: Reading Comprehension and Literary Text.
- Display class performance by Topic, indicating areas of strength and weakness.

DCAS will be utilized to measure student outcomes and to evaluate the overall impact of PALS on student achievement. As described above, DCAS will be administered during the fall, winter, and spring and will provide administrators with a variety of reporting options to evaluate student growth and the effectiveness of the program. School-Wide reports can be utilized to compare Gauger's performance to the district and state, as well as to disaggregate data to examine the scores for various subgroups. To evaluate the overall effectiveness of the new Tier I curriculum, administrators can compare growth in 2011-2012 to 2010-2011 DCAS scores. 2011-2012 targets would utilize 2010-2011 DCAS data as a baseline. Table 19 displays a model for comparing 2010-2011 DCAS Reading Accountability scores (7th Grade) to targets created for 2011-2012.

Table 19 DCAS Reading Accountability Score by Sub-Group						
Group/Sub-Group	2010 (F)	2011 (F) Target	2011 (W)	2012 (W) Target	2011 (S)	2012 (S) Target
All	759	768	777	TBD	TBD	TBD
Hispanic	760	766	782	TBD	TBD	TBD
African-American	751	757	763	TBD	TBD	TBD
White	766	777	789	TBD	TBD	TBD
Spec Ed	701	706	711	TBD	TBD	TBD
Non Spec Ed	766	776	786	TBD	TBD	TBD
Title I	744	751	758	TBD	TBD	TBD
Not Title I	761	770	779	TBD	TBD	TBD

Professional Development Plan

Regardless of the need to improve Tier 1 literacy instruction, PALS implementation can only be successful with quality and ongoing professional development. McKenna and Walpole (2008) describe “high-quality professional support” as a cyclical process in which teachers: (1) are exposed to theory or knowledge related to a new practice, (2) observe a demonstration or modeling of the new practice, (3) are provided an opportunity to practice, and (4) receive feedback. To ensure successful implementation of PALS, each of these aspects are addressed in the professional development plan.

To build knowledge or theory related to PALS, ELA PLC’s will participate in a “jigsaw” style activity. The jigsaw sessions will be planned and facilitated by the instructional coach, using the following research synthesis as the foundation: Research on Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies: the Promise and Limitations of Peer-Mediated Instruction. The instructional coach will visit each ELA PLC, beginning with 7th Grade, to conduct the Jigsaw Sessions. The first session will be held in the second week of September and will correspond with the initial efforts of the 7th grade team to

implement PALS. During the 3rd and 4th week of September, the instructional coach will present the same session to the 6th and 8th grade PLCs respectively, in preparation for their PALS rollout. Teachers will be provided 30 minutes of PLC time the day of the Jigsaw session to read assigned sections before completing the corresponding section of the reading guide with the assistance of the instructional coach. Following this initial session, additional sessions would be developed based on observations and teacher feedback.

To assist with the initial introduction of PALS, Gauger will invite Matt Carre, Howard High School teacher, to work with the ELA department during pre-planning. In addition to providing the theory and research related to PALS, this PD would utilize staff to demonstrate and model the “Partnered Reading Strategies” that are the core of PALS. Additionally, the 7th grade ELA teachers will visit Howard High School in the first week September to observe a PALS session facilitated by Matt Carre himself, providing further insight into implementation. Once implementation has occurred in the 7th grade, and solid models of PALS exist within Gauger, peer visits can be utilized to help 7th grade teachers struggling with implementation and those beginning PALS implementation as rollout expands to 6th and 8th grade classrooms.

Building on the professional development provided by Matt Carre, 7th grade teachers will begin implementation of PALS during the 2nd week of September. Teachers will be provided two weeks to practice PALS without feedback; however, the instructional coach will attend PLCs to facilitate discussions about early successes and to provide support where necessary. As implementation progresses, teachers will be observed by the instructional coach every two weeks, described below, allowing additional time to practice before the next observation.

During the 3rd week of PALS implementation, the instructional coach will observe each teacher conducting a PALS session. During the observation, the instructional coach will record open ended notes related to PALS implementation, leaving these notes for the teacher at the end of the observation. Additionally, the instructional coach and teacher will meet within two days of the observation to discuss strengths and areas of growth. Following this initial observation, the instructional coach will observe a PALS session every two weeks, following the same feedback guidelines, until full implementation is achieved. In addition to feedback from instructional coaches, administrators will begin observing PALS implementation monthly beginning the 6th week of implementation. Feedback will be provided utilizing the following rubric:

Full Implementation	Partial Implementation	No Implementation
<p>Student pairings are based on Lexile scores and follow the prescribed procedure for pairing.</p> <p>Appropriate time is provided for the partnered reading strategies.</p> <p>Partnered reading strategies conducted correctly by all student pairings.</p> <p>Teacher circulates to monitor partnered reading strategies and provides feedback when necessary. Greater than 70% of students actively engaged in partnered reading activities.</p>	<p>Student pairings loosely based on Lexile scores.</p> <p>Time provided for partnered reading strategies is sufficient but managed inefficiently.</p> <p>Partnered reading strategies conducted inconsistently across student groups.</p> <p>Teacher circulation during partnered reading strategies is inconsistent or insufficient.</p> <p>25% - 70% of students actively engaged in partnered reading activities.</p>	<p>Student pairings not based on Lexile scores or non-existence.</p> <p>Time provided for partnered reading strategies is very limited or not observed.</p> <p>Partnered Reading Strategies not conducted or conducted incorrectly.</p> <p>Teacher does not circulate to monitor partnered reading strategies.</p> <p>Less than 25% of students engaged in partnered reading activities.</p>

As with the instructional coach, the administrator and teacher will meet within 2 days to discuss the observation and the status of PALS implementation. The feedback rubric, above, will help to focus the conversation and clarify next steps.

The information gathered from theory building sessions, PLC discussions, and observations will be critical in determining the next steps regarding PD to support PALS implementation. With this in mind, the instructional coach and administrator will meet weekly to discuss progress, concerns, and the direction of professional development. However, information shared in these meetings must be handled

delicately by both parties to ensure that relationships between teachers and the instructional coach are not jeopardized. This is of particular importance because, assuming that there are trusting relationships between teachers and the coach/administrators, valuable information related to necessary supports can be gathered through conversations with teachers.

Summary

At Gauger-Cobbs we often refer to the “little m” or “little mission”, which we describe as preparing our students to be successful in high school. We refer to it as “little” not because it is unimportant, but because is less wordy than our official mission statement. However, as highlighted by recent reading achievement data, too many students leave Gauger lacking the literacy skills needed for success in high school. PALS implementation is a necessary step to improve Tier 1 literacy instruction at Gauger-Cobbs and will result in a big step towards the realization of the “little m”.

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Appendix C

EVALUATION OF PALS

Executive Summary

With the goal of improving “core” literacy instruction, Gauger-Cobbs Middle School has implemented Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) in ELA classrooms school-wide. PALS is comprised of three partnered reading activities, during which students alternate between the role of “reader” and “coach”. PALS follows a strict format and promotes the development of skills related to fluency, identification of subject and main idea, and making predictions. A program evaluation was completed in 7th grade classrooms to investigate the fidelity of implementation and the impact of PALS on reading comprehension. The following evaluation questions were developed to focus the investigation:

Process Question:

Are teachers adhering to the prescribed PALS format?

Outcome Question:

Does PALS result in improved reading comprehension?

An evaluator created rubric was used to investigate the process question and the findings suggested that implementation was at the “Partial” level in most classrooms. Also, the findings identified “Reading Strategies” and “Student Engagement” as areas in need of additional support. Student outcomes were measured using R.A.R.E data collected at three checkpoints, allowing for comparisons between student growth and the fidelity of implementation. The results supported a positive relationship between

implementation fidelity and mean student growth. To solidify this relationship, the evaluator recommends expanding the investigation to include 6th and 8th grade classrooms and creating surveys to gather teacher and student perspectives related to PALS.

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Introduction:

Purpose of Evaluation

This fall Gauger-Cobbs Middle School implemented Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies, also known as PALS, to improve tier 1 literacy instruction. For PALS to be a success, it is critical that teachers implement the program as prescribed. The purpose of this evaluation is to gather data to determine if PALS is being delivered with fidelity. Additionally, the evaluation will determine if, when implemented as prescribed, PALS results in improved reading comprehensions skills. The findings from this evaluation will be utilized to identify areas of growth and the professional development necessary to further support PALS implementation.

Organization of the Report

The report begins with a description of the pairing strategies, partnered reading strategies and overall format of PALS, followed by an introduction to the evaluation questions that were developed to focus the investigation. Next the report discusses the methodology, including the sample, the instruments, and the procedures for data collection and analysis. After a review of key findings, the report closes with a discussion of conclusions and recommendations.

Description of the Program

PALS is comprised of three reading strategies that are completed in pairs, following a strict format. Student pairings are based on Lexile scores, with students being rank ordered (by Lexile) and paired as follows:

Partner A	Partner B
1	17
2	18
3	19
4	20
5	21
6	22
7	23
8	24
9	25
10	26
11	27
12	28
13	29
14	30
15	31
16	32

This method of assignment ensures that the ability levels of students are similar enough they will not become frustrated by differences in abilities. During the first strategy, referred to as “Partner Reading with Retell”, partner A reads aloud for five minutes, while partner B serves as coach, intervening when Partner A struggles with a word or makes a careless mistake. Students receive training and are provided with “cue cards” to ensure that coaching is positive and supportive. After five minutes, partners switch roles, with Partner B reading aloud and Partner A serving as coach for the next 5 minutes. With both students having an opportunity to fulfill each role, students will spend the next two minutes “retelling” facts from the passage. Again, Partner A and B will support one another using verbal cues. During “Paragraph

Shrinking”, the second PALS strategy, partners A and B alternate roles again. Partner A will begin by reading a paragraph, with Partner B serving as coach. Once complete with the paragraph, partner A will “shrink” the paragraph by:

- Identifying the Subject
- Identifying what is important about the subject
- Stating the main idea in 10 words or less

Again, coaches are provided with “cue cards” to help prompt their partners when necessary. Partners A and B will alternate “shrinking” for a total of 10 minutes. The third and final strategy, known as “Prediction Relay”, incorporates the shrinking described above, but also requires students to make a prediction related to the text. In Prediction Relay, Partner A will (except at the beginning of a text) make a prediction about what they expect to happen next. Following this prediction, they will read half of a page before stopping to identify if their prediction was accurate, and to shrink the text. Partner B will serve as coach, prompting students during the shrinking process and coaching students during the read aloud. Partner A will continue to predict, read, and shrink for a total of 5 minutes before switching roles with Partner B for 5 additional minutes.

In its entirety PALS requires a total of 32 minutes, detailed in the table below:

Time	Activity
5 minutes	Partner A reads
5 minutes	Partner B reads
2 minutes	Alternate retelling facts
5 minutes	Partner A paragraph shrinking
5 minutes	Partner B paragraph shrinking
5 minutes	Partner A prediction relay
5 minutes	Partner B prediction relay

The combination of the three PALS strategies allows students to develop skills related to fluency, identifying subject and main idea, and making predictions. Additionally, the intensity of the 32 minutes every other day, will increase reading stamina and help to engrain the PALS strategies. The result of the internalization of the PALS strategies and increased reading stamina will be improved reading comprehension skills and increased student achievement.

Evaluation Questions:

In the interest of assessing the PALS program the following evaluation questions were developed:

Process Question:

Are teachers adhering to the prescribed PALS format?

Outcome Question:

Does PALS result in improved reading comprehension?

I believe it is important to investigate these questions side by side, as there is an obvious connection between the process and the outcome. Specifically, if PALS is implemented with fidelity and student outcomes are positive, then one can reason that there is value in the program. Conversely, if the program is implemented with fidelity and student outcomes are negative or neutral, than one can reason that there is little value in the use of PALS. This relationship was critical during the selection of my sample for data collection because it was important that the sample explore the link between the process and outcome. As a result, I chose to sample 7th grade ELA teachers to investigate my process question and 7th grade students to investigate my outcome question. This will allow me to investigate the relationship described above; however, it should be noted that with implementation in the very early stages, it is possible that expectations for increased achievement scores are premature.

Methodology:

Sample:

As indicated above, I selected 7th grade ELA teachers as the sample population for my investigation into the process question. This sample was chosen largely because 7th grade teachers are collecting R.A.R.E response data at pre-determined “checkpoints”, which can be used to measure student progress and outcomes. Additional information about the sample population is contained in the following table:

Table 20 . Teacher Demographics – Sample vs. Population				
	Black	White	Male	Female
Sample - 7 th Grade Teachers	50%	50%	33%	67%
Population – School-Wide	8.2%	81.8%	31%	69%

Note: School-Wide Teacher Demographics based on 2010-2011 School Profile Data.

Although small, the sample is representative of the composition of ELA teachers in other grade levels. Specifically, each grade level is composed of 4 regular education teachers, with the support of two special education teachers and despite potential differences in teaching experience, all ELA teachers received the same training and have the same amount of experience with PALS. One difference between the sample and the population is the racial/ethnic breakdown of staff, which is less balanced amongst the whole staff.

In regards to the outcome question, I have selected 7th grade students as the sample population. As described above, this selection was made to allow for the use of R.A.R.E data to measure student progress. Table 21 provides demographic data (by percent) for the 7th grade sample population compared to the school-wide population.

Table 21	Student Demographics – Sample vs. Population	
	Sample – 7 th Grade	Population – School-Wide
Number of Students	415	1208
African American	38%	42%
White	57%	55%
Asian/Pacific Islander	4%	2%
American Indian	1%	1%
Male	54%	53%
Female	46%	47%
Low-Income	56%	57%

Overall, the 7th grade sample is representative of the larger population, with the demographical data related to race/ethnicity and gender being very similar to that of the whole-school.

Instruments

Data related to the process question was collected through teacher observation and completion of the evaluator created PALS implementation rubric. The rubric (See Appendix A) rated teachers on each of the following components of PALS: Student Pairings, Use of Time, Reading Strategies (Are students doing it correctly?), Teacher Engagement, and Use of Incentives and Student Engagement. Scores range from a 1 or “No Implementation” to a 3 or “Full Implementation” across all 6 areas included on

the rubric. To gather data related to the outcome question, R.A.R.E. response data was collected from 7th grade teachers. The R.A.R.E (Re-state/Answer/Reasons/Example) response rubric (See Appendix B) allows teachers to measure a student's ability to make connections to a text while responding to a writing prompt. Students fall into the following three categories based on their score: Meets Standard (10-12), Approaching Standard (7-9), and Below Standard (6 and below). As reading comprehension improves, the ability of students to make connections to the text should improve as well, resulting in increased achievement as measured by R.A.R.E. However, it is important to acknowledge that R.A.R.E responses are graded individually by teacher's based on the rubric and thus there is the opportunity for differences in scoring amongst teachers.

Data Collection Procedures

To gather data related to the process, I visited each 7th grade classroom to observe a full PALS session. Based on that observation, I completed the PALS Implementation Rubric, with each classroom being classified as "Full Implementation", "Partial Implementation", or "No Implementation". Observations were conducted between 10/31/2011 and 11/11/11, to ensure adequate time for data analysis. Teachers earned a score in each of the six categories, ranging from 1 (No Implementation) to 3 (Full Implementation).

Data related to student outcomes was collected from 7th grade teachers following the third R.A.R.E administration. The first administration occurred in September and was used to establish baseline data for each classroom. A second administration occurred in mid-October and a third administration occurred in mid-

November. This schedule provided three data points to determine if PALS resulted in increased reading comprehension.

Data Analysis Procedures

To analyze the data collected through the implementation rubric, an excel spreadsheet was created to record the rubric scores for each teacher, in each of the five areas. Once all scores were recorded, excel was utilized to calculate a mean for each area of implementation measured by the rubric. These mean scores were utilized to identify areas of strength and weakness related to PALS implementation. This process also allowed me to identify individual teachers that are struggling and broad areas in need of additional support across all teachers.

For the R.A.R.E data, I created a spreadsheet with a column for each test administration and recorded the data for each student by teacher. Using excel, I calculated the mean score for each administration by teacher, allowing for comparison of mean growth across the three data points.

To analyze the impact of implementation on student outcomes, I created a table containing the mean scores for each R.A.R.E administration, by classroom, and the mean implementation score earned in in each classroom, as measured by completion of the PALS implementation rubric. This data was analyzed to identify relationships between the fidelity of implementation and student outcomes as measured by R.A.R.E.

Results:

Findings

Data collected through use of the PALS implementation rubric identifies differences in the fidelity of implementation across 7th grade classrooms. Table 22 below, captures differences in fidelity for each criteria on the rubric and includes the mean score earned in each classroom.

Table 22	Rubric Data				
	A	B	C	D	Mean Rubric Score by Class
Student Pairings	3	2	3	1	2.25
Use of Time	2	2	3	1	2.25
Reading Strategies	2	2	2	1	1.75
Teacher Engagement	3	3	3	1	2.5
Use of Incentives	3	3	3	1	2.5
Student Engagement	3	2	2	1	2
Mean by Class	2.83	2.33	2.67	1	

As it relates to the process question (Are teachers adhering to the prescribed PALS format?), these finding suggest that, with the exception of Classroom D, all classrooms have earned “partial implementation” in each criteria of the PALS rubric. Additionally, mean scores in 2 of the 4 classrooms were closer to “full” than “partial” implementation. Finally, the data also revealed mean scores were lowest in the areas of “Reading Strategies” and “Student Engagement” when examined across all 7th grade classrooms.

Table 23 displays mean R.A.R.E scores, mean growth (measured from R.A.R.E administration # 1 to R.A.R.E administration # 3) and the mean implementation score earned in each classroom.

Table 23 Mean R.A.R.E Growth by Classroom and Administration				
Classroom	A	B	C	D
Implementation Score	2.83	2.33	2.67	1
R.A.R.E # 1	2.07	2.12	2.17	N/A
R.A.R.E # 2	2.28	2.28	2.46	N/A
R.A.R.E # 3	2.56	2.42	2.53	2.68
Mean Growth	.49	.30	.36	N/A

Regarding the outcome question (Does PALS result in improved reading comprehension?), the data in Table 23 supports a positive relationship between implementation fidelity and student growth. Excluding Classroom D, the mean growth was higher in classrooms which earned a higher mean implementation score.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Overall, the findings from the program evaluation have provided valuable insight into PALS implementation at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School. As it relates to fidelity, evaluation into the process question suggests the following:

- Generally speaking, implementation is at or beyond “Partial Implementation” as described in the implementation rubric.
- Additional support is needed in the areas of “Reading Strategies” and “Student Engagement”.

In terms of student outcomes, the following conclusion was developed:

- Mean student growth was higher in classrooms with higher mean implementation scores.

Although the findings support potentially positive outcomes for students engaged in PALS, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the evaluation. First, the evaluation collected process and outcome data for 7th grade classrooms only and one cannot assume that the findings would be similar for 6th and 8th grade classrooms. Second, student outcomes are measured using the R.A.R.E response rubric, which allows for variances in teacher scoring. To address these limitations, I recommend that Gauger-Cobbs Middle School take the following action:

5. Complete the PALS Implementation Rubric for all 6th and 8th grade classrooms.

- Analyze this data to evaluate the fidelity of implementation school-wide.
 - Analyze this data to identify areas in need of additional support and professional development.
6. Use DCAS data (2011- 2012) to monitor student growth and progress as it relates to reading comprehension.
- Compare mean growth (measured by DCAS) to implementation scores to further investigate the connection between fidelity of implementation and student growth.
7. Create and administer a survey for ELA teachers, gathering feedback related to PALS implementation (areas in need of support) and perceived benefits of PALS (if any).
- This data can be compared to rubric scores to identify the area's most in need of support and professional development.
8. Create and administer a survey to all students, to investigate perceptions related to PALS participation and improved reading abilities.

- Use this data to see if there is alignment between DCAS Data, Teacher Perceptions', and Student Perceptions' related to student outcomes and benefits of PALS.

Appendix C.1

PALS Implementation Rubric

Teacher: _____

Observer: _____

Date/Block _____

PALS Implementation Rubric

	No Implementation	Partial Implementation	Full Implementation
Score	1	2	3
Student Pairings	Student pairings not based on Lexile scores or non-existence.	Student pairings loosely based on Lexile scores.	Student pairings are based on Lexile scores and follow the prescribed procedure for pairing.
Use of Time	No time is allotted for partnered reading strategies.	Time is allotted for partnered reading strategies, but does not match the prescribed PALS format (see below).	Time allotted for partnered reading strategies is in alignment with prescribed PALS format (see below).
Reading Strategies	Partnered Reading Strategies utilized correctly by less than 25% of student pairings.	Partnered reading strategies utilized correctly by 25% - 70% of student pairings.	Partnered reading strategies utilized correctly by greater than 70% of student pairings.
Teacher Engagement	Teacher circulation occurs less than 25% of the time during partnered reading strategies.	Teacher circulation occurs 25% - 70% of the time during partnered reading strategies.	Teacher circulation occurs greater than 70% of the time during partnered reading strategies.
Use of Incentives	Teacher rewards on task behavior less than 25% of	Teachers rewards on task behavior 25% - 70% of observed	Teacher rewards on task behavior greater than 70% of observed

	observed opportunities.	opportunities.	opportunities.
Student Engagement	Less than 25% of student actively engaged in partnered reading activities.	25% - 70% of students actively engaged in partnered reading activities.	Greater than 70% of students actively engaged in partnered reading activities.

Prescribed PALS Format

Time	Activity
5 minutes	Partner A reads
5 minutes	Partner B reads
2 minutes	Alternate retelling facts
5 minutes	Partner A paragraph shrinking
5 minutes	Partner B paragraph shrinking
5 minutes	Partner A prediction relay
5 minutes	Partner B prediction relay

Appendix C.2 :

R.A.R.E Response Rubric

	3 Meets Standard	2 Approaching Standard	1 Below Standard
R	There is a clear restatement of the question. The reader does not have to look at the question know what is being asked.	Attempt to restate the question but it is unclear and/or incomplete.	No restate of the question and/or the student begins an answer with because, so, to, that, or uses pronouns.
A	Question is answered correctly and completely	Answer is partially correct and/or partially complete	Answer is incorrect, irrelevant, or not included.
R	Student provided reason to.... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show why/how the answer is correct • Explain the answer • Prove the answer is correct • Show understanding of the answer. • The reasons are relevant to the answer. 	Reasons are somewhat relevant to the answer. Reasons provided do not prove or show full understanding of answer.	Reasons are not included and/or not relevant to the answer.
E	Example is provided or text is cited. Example or cited text supports the answer.	Example is provided or text is cited but does not successfully support the answer.	No example provided or text in not cited.

Score:

10-12 = Meets Standard

7-9 = Approaching Standard

6 and Below = Below Standard

Appendix D

CASE STUDY OF RTI IMPLEMENTATION

Overview

If not clear at the start of the process, it has become clear that establishing a comprehensive literacy program is a complex task. To date efforts have produced mixed results and it is important that the leadership at Gauger is thoughtful in planning next steps. In situations such as these, a “case study” is a useful exercise, allowing those close to a situation to reflect on the problem from multiple perspectives. For the purpose of problem solving, this case study reflected on past efforts through a 4 framed approach. Specifically, the process included reflection related the structural, human resource, political, and symbolic aspects, or frames. Ultimately, this process resulted in recommendations for the 2013-2014 school-year.

Case Narrative

Background Information

Located in Newark, De, Gauger-Cobbs Middle School is one of 4 middle schools in the Christina School District. With a total of 26 traditional schools, the district is the largest in Delaware and services students in the city of Wilmington and surrounding suburbs. Enrollment in the district has steadily declined in recent years, dropping from nearly 20,000 in 2002 to just fewer than 17,000 in 2012. The demographical breakdown of the district’s student body is as follows: 40.8% African American, 35% White, 17.5 % Hispanic, and 4.3% Asian. Additionally, 59.8% of students are identified as low income, 14.8% as special education and 7.0% as second language learners. Academically, the district is “Below Target”, as it relates to AYP, and earned Delaware’s lowest rating of “Academic Watch”. The drop-out rate in

2010-2011 was 7.8%, compared to 5.6% in 2009-2010 and 10.3% in 2008-2009.

Additionally, 11th grade SAT scores show that the district is lagging behind the state in both participation (88% v. 93%) and achievement, with an average total score of 1,229 compared to 1,296 for the state.

Gauger-Cobbs Middle School is home to 1,158 students in grades 6-8.

Demographical data for Gauger is comparable to that of the district, with 40.8% of all students identified as African American and 39.5%, 15.8%, and 3% identified as White, Hispanic and Asian respectively. Additionally, 58.4% of students are identified as low-income, with 10.8% and 2.8% identified as special education and second language learners.

Gauger-Cobbs has a total of 86 instructional units including: 74 teachers, 1 librarian, and 11 pupil support units. The demographic breakdown for instructional staff is as follows: 73.1% White, 19.8% African American, and 1.2% American Indian. Additionally, Gauger's staff has a core group of experienced and well educated teachers, with 62.2% having greater than ten years of experience and 60.4% having earned a master's degree or higher.

As it relates to student achievement, Gauger-Cobbs has met AYP two of the last three years and is currently ranked as "Commendable", the second highest ranking in the state. Despite meeting AYP in 2010-2011, only 46% of 6th grade, 51% of 7th grade, and 54% of 8th grade students were proficient in reading, as measured by DCAS.

Response to Intervention (RTI)

Upon accepting an offer to become the assistant principal at Gauger Middle School, I began attending brainstorming and training sessions related to RTI during the 2008-2009 school year. With implementation having already begun at the elementary level, these trainings were designed to help secondary schools as they prepared to comply with the impending state mandate for RTI at the secondary level. Despite several years of notice and “preparation”, few decisions had been made, and the vision for RTI at Gauger remained unclear as the 2010-2011 school year closed. In the summer leading up to the 2011-2012 school year, central office began asking questions about Gauger’s specific plan for RTI implementation. In response, Gauger proposed a 6th grade “pull-out” pilot to provide literacy interventions to tier 2 and tier 3 students. This pilot would help to identify successes and failure in preparation for school-wide implementation in 2012-2013. Communication to the staff regarding RTI was limited mostly to the 6th grade; however, the mandate requiring RTI was frequently referenced in relationship to the pilot and to eventual school-wide implementation. To cushion the blow of taking on additional responsibilities, the administrative team emphasized the role that 6th grade teachers would play in shaping the model used for school-wide implementation.

Master Schedule

As assistant principal, I have been heavily involved in the scheduling process since 2008-2009. During this period, maintaining the “team” concept, whereby a group of core teachers share the same students, has been the priority at Gauger. This

model provides consistency for students, while allowing teachers to collaborate to better support the needs of students. The result has been a very “clean” 4 block, A/B schedule, with the A day being referred to as “Blue Day” and the B day “Gold Day”. Each day, students at Gauger-Cobbs attend 3 core classes (English Language Arts, Math, and Science or Social Studies) and one expressive art/509 (i.e. Art, Family and Consumer Science, etc.). Each block is 84 minutes in length, with all students receiving a “Double-Dose” of English Language Arts and Math. The use of the “double-dose” means that students receive 84 minutes of math and ELA instruction each day. Science and Social Studies are also offered as a “Double-Dose”, but are semester courses. Thus students will participate in Science for half of the school year, before switching to Social Studies for the second half; or vice-versa. Expressive Arts and 509 courses are offered by grade level in a semester format, limiting the interaction between students of different grades. Table 24 shows a possible student schedule.

Table 24 Possible 6 th Grade Schedule	
Blue Day	Gold Day
B-1 Math	G-5 Science/Social Studies
B-2 ELA	G-6 Expressive Arts/Social Studies
B-3 Science/Social Studies	G-7 Math
B-4 Expressive Arts/509	G-8 ELA

Students who are identified as special education receive “Academic Support” in place of an expressive art/509, limiting their elective opportunities. Year-long electives such as Orchestra, Band, and Spanish further limit the expressive arts/509 opportunities for students. Although we have experienced success with our current model, it limits flexibility in the way teaching units can be utilized and limits elective opportunities for students.

Intervention Structure

Prior to the 2011-2012 school year, literacy intervention was “expected” to occur within the ELA classroom during the additional time provided by the double-dose. Teachers were free to choose when intervention occurred and the resources utilized for intervention. Support and monitoring related to interventions from the administrative team were minimal and as a result, the additional time provided by the double-dose was typically not utilized for intervention. At the start of the current school year, Gauger-Cobbs began implementation of Response to Intervention (RTI), creating a literacy intervention schedule for 6th grade. Students were identified using DCAS data collected through I-Tracker Pro. Generally speaking, students that scored a 1 on DCAS were placed into a tier 3 intervention (i.e. Read 180), while students that scored a 2 on DCAS were put into a “pull-out” group. These students were “pulled” from ELA class by an interventionist for 30 minutes every other day (Blue Days). Students scoring 3 or above remained in their classroom for enrichment, typically completing a writing or reading assignment that the “pull-out” students would not be expected to complete. A part-time RTI coordinator was hired to assist with the managing of resources, scheduling of interventions, documenting of interventions, and monitoring of RTI implementation.

Selection and Training of Interventionists

The selection of staff to provide literacy interventions occurred through two specific pathways. First, staff members who had gaps in their teaching assignment were assigned to RTI. With the exception of the Read 180 interventionist, no strategy was used in the scheduling process to ensure that teachers with gaps would be strong interventionists. In the second pathway, a teacher was pulled from a co-taught

classroom to provide interventions to a “pull-out” group. In this instance, the decision was more strategic, as the teacher with the greater knowledge of intervention was pulled to work with small groups.

In regards to professional development for interventionists, training was provided around the use of I-tracker Pro. These trainings were facilitated by the RTI coordinator and assisted interventionists with the creation and monitoring of intervention groups. As it relates to training for specific interventions, only Read 180 and Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) were supported with formal professional development for staff. Read 180 training was delivered through program representatives directly to the interventionist, while PALS training was delivered to all ELA teachers through two sessions. The first session was an overview of the PALS process, while the second session provided teachers with information related to creating PALS partnerships and training students on the PALS procedures. Training for the remaining interventions, Corrective Reading, Read Naturally Encore, and Targeted Reading Interventions (teacher created materials), was provided by the RTI coordinator on an individual or small group basis.

Interventions and Resources:

Aside from Targeted Reading Interventions, which were teacher created, the pilot program utilized the following interventions:

1. Read 180 (Tier 3)
A computer-based program, Read 180 is designed for students two or more grade levels behind in reading. The program is adaptive, with an instructional cycle that includes whole-group instruction, small-group

rotations (including small group instruction, instructional software, and modeled and independent reading) and a whole-group wrap-up.

2. PALS (Tier 2)

PALS is a collection of the following partnered reading strategies

designed to improve fluency and comprehension:

- Partnered Reading w/Retell – Students alternate reading (5 Mins Each) followed by two minutes of “Retelling” during which they alternate retelling events from the text.
- Paragraph Shrinking – Students alternate reading (5 Mins Each) stopping after each paragraph to “shrink”; meaning they state the main idea in ten words or less.
- Prediction Relay – Again students alternate reading (5 Mins Each), however before reading they make a prediction about what will happen, stopping after each paragraph to shrink and see if their prediction was correct.

PALS strictly adheres to the following format:

Time	Activity
5 minutes	Partner A reads
5 minutes	Partner B reads
2 minutes	Alternate retelling facts
5 minutes	Partner A paragraph shrinking
5 minutes	Partner B paragraph shrinking
5 minutes	Partner A prediction relay
5 minutes	Partner B prediction relay

3. Corrective Reading (Tier 3)

- Developed for students at least 1 grade level behind, Corrective Reading is a scripted program that contains lessons addressing decoding and comprehension skills. Corrective reading can be delivered to whole-group or small groups effectively.

4. Read Naturally Encore (Tier 3)

- Read Naturally Encore is an intervention program based on teacher modeling, repeated reading, and progress monitoring. Read Naturally can also be used to address fluency and comprehension issues.

The management of resources related to these interventions was another aspect of the 6th grade pilot program. Resources for Corrective Reading and Read Naturally Encore were housed in the Teaching and Learning Suite (at Gauger) and distributed with the help of the RTI Coordinator. For PALS, the primary resource was books, of which Gauger had an adequate supply; however, the use of the library for DCAS testing hampered the ability of students to check out books during test administrations.

Technology capacity also impacted participation in the Read 180 intervention program. Only one lab was dedicated solely to Read 180, with one other available for 1 block every other day. This greatly limited the amount of students that could receive the intervention.

RTI Core Team

Composed of the RTI coordinator, interventionists, school psychologist, and a building administrator, the RTI Core team met monthly to support implementation. Although agenda items were different from meeting to meeting, common topics were: identifying students, use of I-tracker, progress monitoring, and materials/resources needed. Comprised of more than 15 members, the team struggled to reach consensus on issues and lacked clear defined roles for team members. As a result, few decisions were made and agenda items were rarely seen through to the next meeting.

Teacher Feedback

On April 24th, 2012 an RTI Panel Session was held to allow the teachers involved in RTI to share their experiences and to engage the whole staff in a conversation about school-wide implementation. With the meeting facilitated by our instructional coach and master teacher, I was more than curious to hear feedback related to the pilot, as well as thoughts about next steps. During the session the following themes emerged regarding the pilot:

- Transitioning students from their classroom to the RTI location (another classroom) was time consuming and reduced the amount of time for intervention.

- Efforts to complete the intervention often resulted in students returning to their scheduled block late, resulting in missed instruction.
- There was a lack of resources for both students left behind and those receiving intervention.

In addition, the ELA department expressed concern about “lost-time” and their inability to continue some of their previous practices, such as Sustained Silent Reading (SSR).

This feedback was followed by a brainstorming session to develop ideas related to how RTI should or could look in the upcoming school-year. From this discussion emerged three potential solutions, each of which contained their own set of pro’s and con’s. The first idea was simply to expand the pull-out effort to 7th and 8th grade, using our 2011-2012 experiences to improve the process. The second idea was to add a 45 minute “skinny” to Blue day, to allow for intervention and eliminate the need for pull-out. The third and final suggestion was to mimic a 5-block A/B rotating schedule, currently used at Shue-Medill, which would allow interventions to be a scheduled throughout the day, thus maximizing resources and technology.

Challenge

As the session concluded, the realization that our pilot had produced more questions than answers was evident to the administrative team and staff. The question of how to best provide intervention to students at Gauger-Cobbs, was still without an answer.

Frame Analysis

Structural:

With an emphasis on formal roles (differentiation), policies, tasks, and coordination of effort (integration); the structural frame is foundational in nature and critical to the success of an organization. In total there are Six “Assumptions” associated with the structural frame, which can be used to guide analysis. The first assumption, “Organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives”, speaks to the need for clearly articulated goals and objectives. Without established goals and objectives, efforts can easily get off track and will be nearly impossible to refocus. The second assumption, “Organizations increase efficiency and enhance performance through specialization and appropriate division of labor”, underscores the need for differentiation; including well-defined roles and responsibilities. If leadership fails to define roles and responsibilities then individuals will create their own, which may not support the identified goals and objectives. The third assumption, “Suitable forms of coordination and control ensure that diverse efforts of individuals and units mesh”, calls for integration amongst individuals. Leaders must ensure that the use of time is efficient and that efforts are not duplicated or allow for gaps in the delivery of services. The fourth assumption, “Organizations work best when rationality prevails over personal agendas and extraneous pressures”, highlights the need for a committed effort to reach goals and objectives. For educators, focusing on rationality is challenging because of the emotional and human element associated with the work. If rationality is to prevail, leadership must communicate a consistent message, reinforcing the logic behind decisions made. The fifth assumption which reads, “Structures must be designed to fit an organization’s current circumstances” is perhaps

the most foundational in my opinion. In schools, perhaps more than any other organization, we cling to policies and practices that often do not align with the needs of our current clients. Educational leaders must examine policies and practices to ensure that they are effectively addressing the needs of students. The sixth assumption, “problems arise and performance suffers from structural deficiencies, which can be remedied through analysis and restructuring”, highlights the importance of frequent review and revision to structural components. A true “structural” leader would view this as the “end all be all” to improved performance, however I view it as the “foundation” to improved performance, recognizing the need for attention around the other frames.

As it relates to the implementation of RTI at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School, review of the case using the six assumptions associated with the structural frame generated the following reflections:

Frame Assumption	Reflections
Organizations exist to achieve established goals and objectives.	During implementation Gauger leadership failed to articulate clear goals/objectives related to RTI implementation, focusing solely on the need to comply with the mandate. I believe this occurred largely because the initiative was in a “pilot” stage, with communication limited to a small number of staff and much of the program was being developed “on the fly”.
Organizations increase efficiency and enhance performance through specialization and appropriate division of labor.	Although the formal roles of “coordinator” and “interventionist” were created their responsibilities were not clearly defined.
Suitable forms of coordination and control ensure that diverse efforts of individuals and units mesh.	The establishment of the RTI Core team provided a pathway for coordination, however I believe the team was too large and roles were unclear. To be successful roles and responsibilities must be clarified and the team needs to be streamlined to become more efficient, particularly with the initiative being taken school-wide.
Organizations work best when rationality prevails over personal agendas and extraneous pressures.	There is clear logic to support intervention for the most needy of students, however Gauger leadership did not capitalize on, or even acknowledge this fact. Instead the message was that we must provide interventions due to mandate, limiting “buy-in”.
Structures must be designed to fit an organization’s current circumstances.	The pull-out nature of the program resulted in difficulties accounting for students during transition and less time available to provide interventions. If this model is used for school-wide implementation, one can only expect these issues to intensify. For implementation to be successful intervention must be a priority during

Problems arise when performance suffers from structural deficiencies, which can be remedied through analysis and restructuring.

master scheduling as opposed to an afterthought.
To remedy the structural issues identified during the pilot, Gauger-Cobbs must establish the following:
Clear goals & Objectives, including Core Team.
Clear roles & responsibilities.
An emphasis on the “rationality” of implementing RTI.
Intervention as 1st priority during master scheduling.

Human Resources:

Unlike the structural frame, the human resource frame acknowledges the human element; focusing on interpersonal relationships, motivation, and satisfaction. Built on four assumptions, the human resource frame also recognizes the importance of considering the needs, skills, and feelings of those within an organization. The first assumption, “Organizations exist to serve human needs rather than the converse”, is a natural fit for public education. Although educators often fail to recognize the customer service aspect, the fact is that educators provide a service to students and families. Educational leaders must emphasize this relationship with their staff and ensure that the focus of their organization is doing what is “best for students”. The second assumption, “People and organizations need each other. Organizations need ideas, energy, and talent; people need careers, salaries, and opportunities”, acknowledges the interdependence between the organization and its people. Leaders must recognize that the satisfaction of their employees is a critical ingredient and that attention must be given to the needs and feelings of staff. The third assumption reads, “When the fit between individual and system is poor, one or both suffer. Individuals

are exploited or exploit the organization or both become victims.” This assumption captures the need for administrators to place staff in positions where they can succeed. The fourth assumption, “A good fit benefits both. Individuals find meaningful and satisfying work, and organizations get the talent and energy they need to succeed”, builds on assumption three and highlights the need to be strategic in the way staff is utilized.

In terms of implementation of RTI at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School, review of the case using the four assumptions of the human resource frame generated the following reflections:

Frame Assumption	Reflections
Organizations exist to serve human needs rather than the converse.	As captured in the case, communication about the need for RTI focused on compliance with a mandate. A better approach would have been to connect the implementation of RTI to our mission, vision, and school improvement goals. Although the connection to improving the achievement of struggling students and fulfilling the mission, vision, and goals of a school is not a stretch, failing to cement the connection devalues RTI. To some extent, I believe that this communication was not given as much attention because much of the work was being developed as we went along and was only occurring at the 6 th grade level.
People and organizations need each other. Organizations need ideas, energy, and talent; people need careers, salaries, and opportunities.	Although the case made clear that staff were provided opportunities to provide feedback and discuss next steps, this dialogue did not occur, until the end of the year. Gauger could have capitalized on the “ideas” and “energy” of staff before beginning implementation.
When the fit between individual and system is poor, one or both suffer. Individuals are exploited or exploit the organization or both become victims.	As it relates to “fit” the case acknowledges that the assignment of interventionists was not always based on the skills or desires of the teacher, but rather who had free time in their schedule. Moving forward interventionist need to be selected before scheduling based on their abilities.
A good fit benefits both. Individuals find meaningful and satisfying work, and organizations get the talent and energy they need to succeed.	The case highlights the lack of planning and strategy in selecting interventionists to participate in RTI.

Political:

In an environment with limited resources and competing agendas, the political or power frame emphasizes the role of power, competition, and conflict within an organization. Effective organizations are able to bargain, negotiate, and build relationships to minimize the potentially negative impact of politics. The political frame is underscored by 5 assumptions, the first of which reads “Organizations are a coalition of diverse interests and special interest groups.” In public education this can include anything from unions, to departments or grade level teams, amongst others. Additionally, leadership must be aware of informal groups that can become powerful and either support or stunt initiatives. The second assumption, “There are enduring differences among coalition members in values, beliefs, information, interests, and perceptions of reality”, is also applicable to public education. The challenge for leadership is to identify the beliefs and perspectives that can be utilized to move groups with distinct differences towards a common goal. The third assumption, “Most important decisions involve allocating scarce resources. Who gets what?” is particularly applicable in today’s economic climate. Competing groups always feel as though their program is deserving of additional resources and administrators must align resources to priority areas, without alienating groups of lesser priority. The fourth assumption which reads, “Scarce resources and enduring differences make conflict central to organizational dynamics and underline power as the most important asset”, highlights the need for administrators to be aware of the priorities of interest groups within their building and support the interest that align with school improvement goals to the best of their ability. The final assumption, “Goals and decisions emerge from bargaining, negotiation, and jockeying for position among stakeholders”, is the “bottom-line” of the political frame. Educational leaders must

create as many “win-win” situations as possible and when situations arise that a group must “lose” it is important that something else is offered to buffer the loss.

In terms of implementation of RTI at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School, review of the case using the five assumptions of the political frame generated the following reflections:

Frame Assumption	Reflections
Organizations are a coalition of diverse interests and special interest groups.	While there are many diverse groups at Gauger-Cobbs, the RTI Pilot only impacted the routine of 6 th Grade ELA teachers. However, we did make an attempt to appeal to the other groups, asking for their input on what school-wide implementation would look like in 2012-2013.
There are enduring differences among coalition members in values beliefs, information, interests, and perceptions of reality.	The case makes mention of the fact that the intervention, replaced the use of Sustained Silent Reading. For some teachers this was difficult to accept, while it was welcomed by others. As implementation expands, more of these types of conflicts can be expected.
Most important decisions involve allocating scarce resources. Who gets what?	Resources attached to RTI were either provided by the district (i.e. Read 180) or did not require additional expenditures, such as PALS. This limited concerns or conflict related to use of resources. At this time I do not see this changing as implementation goes school- wide.
Scarce resources and enduring differences make conflict central to organizational dynamics and underline power as the most important asset.	Although limited resources were an issue related implementation, there was no conflict as funds were not taken from other areas.
Goals and decisions emerge from bargaining, negotiation, and jockeying for position among stakeholders.	Although there was little to offer 6 th grade ELA teachers, one advantage of participating in the pilot was the power to help mold school-wide implementation.

Symbolic Frame:

Rooted in ritual, ceremony, and stories, the symbolic frame speaks to the culture of an organization. Comprised of five assumptions, the symbolic or cultural frame must be attended to if organizational goals are to be met. The first assumption, “What is most important is not what happens, but what it means”, suggest that leadership must be weary of how actions are perceived by their staff. Frequent communication about the beliefs associated with an action can help to shape perceptions of the staff. The second assumption, “Activity and meaning are loosely coupled; events and actions have multiple interpretations as people experience life differently”, emphasizes the need for a consistent message about the intent of actions. However, leaders must understand that even with frequent communication, perceptions will differ. The third assumption, “Facing uncertainty and ambiguity, people create symbols to resolve confusion, find direction, and anchor hope and faith”, speaks to the need to have clarity around the mission and vision of an action or initiative. If leadership fails to provide direction, staff will create their own. The fourth assumption reads, “Events and processes are often more important for what is expressed than for what is produced. The emblematic form weaves a tapestry of secular myths, heroes and heroines, rituals, ceremonies, and stories to help people find purpose and passion.” Essentially, the communication about beliefs and vision can be more powerful than the actual outcomes or results of an initiative. As a result educational leaders must be vocal about both, or misconceptions can derail an otherwise successful program or initiative. The fifth assumption, “Culture forms the superglue that bonds an organization, unites people, and helps an enterprise accomplish desired ends”, highlights the need for educational leaders to engage in

culture building and maintenance. Without culture the most structurally sound efforts can fall to the wayside.

In terms of implementation of RTI at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School, review of the case using the five assumptions of the symbolic frame generated the following reflections:

Frame Assumption	Reflections
What is most important is not what happens, but what it means.	From review of the case, it is evident that there was no effort to develop a vision related to RTI implementation, limiting the impact of the actions taken.
Activity and meaning are loosely coupled; events and actions have multiple interpretations as people experience life differently.	Communication from leadership was infrequent and lacked vision. To overcome these individual interpretations, Gauger will need to create a vision around RTI and communicate that vision repeatedly.
Facing uncertainty and ambiguity, people create symbols to resolve confusion, find direction, and anchor hope and faith.	Gauger's administrative team must provide the direction or vision.
Events and processes are often more important for what is expressed than for what is produced. The emblematic form weaves a tapestry of secular myths, heroes and heroines, rituals, ceremonies, and stories to help people find purpose and passion.	The lack of priority given to intervention during the scheduling process, coupled with the lack of vision or communication of a vision, symbolized that RTI was not a priority. For RTI to grow it must become a priority during master scheduling, faculty meetings, PLC's, and efforts/results must be celebrated.
Culture forms the superglue that bonds an organization, unites people, and helps an enterprise accomplish desired ends.	The administrative team can infuse RTI into Gauger's culture by creating and communicating a vision, making intervention a priority during scheduling, and including RTI in the rituals (i.e. faculty meetings) and celebrations (i.e. incentive programs) that occur each year at Gauger.

Leadership Actions

Overall, the multiple frame analysis generated reflection in each specific frame. However, it also revealed that overlap exists between the frames and that action taken by leadership could address weakness identified in different frames. For example, clearly articulating goals and objectives, as discussed in the structural frame, would also help to establish a vision; which was clearly lacking when viewed through the symbolic frame. With that in mind, I have developed several recommended leadership actions to address the weaknesses captured through the multiple frame analysis. First, I believe that Gauger-Cobbs should change the structure of the master schedule to better support RTI. Specifically, I recommend that Gauger move to the rotating 5 block A/B model used by Shue. Use of this model would allow interventions to be scheduled into the student's regular day and the rotating aspect of the schedule would allow Gauger to maximize computer labs for Read 180. Also, I feel that the dramatic shift would send a strong symbolic message to staff about the increased priority on providing interventions through RTI. Second, I recommend that Gauger create an RTI Handbook in preparation for 2012-2013 school year and school-wide implementation. This manual should include the following:

1. A Vision Statement.
 - This vision should be connected to Gauger's vision and Instructional Focus to assure that RTI is not viewed as "another thing".

2. Measureable Goals and Objectives for school-wide implementation.
 - Goals and objectives should be connected to the school improvement plan to further support integration and acceptance of RTI.
3. Defined Roles & Responsibilities.
 - This section would clarify the roles and responsibilities of the RTI Coordinator and Interventionist. Additionally, this section could outline the number of RTI Core Team members and their responsibilities.
4. Description of Interventions and Resources.
 - This section would provide an overview of research based literacy interventions (I.E. PALS) and resources available in the building or district to support these interventions.
5. I-Tracker Pro Tutorial
 - This section would provide assistance in creating and managing intervention groups, including screen shots and contact information for the Data Service Center Help Desk.

This creation of this document would assist in communicating the vision and goals/objectives of RTI implementation, as well as clarify the roles and responsibilities of the interventionist, core team members, and the RTI coordinator. Also the document would assist staff with understanding approved interventions and the use of I-Tracker for creating and tracking interventions. Finally, the document would help to set expectations around RTI implementation and provide a reference point for future conversations. Third, I recommend that the Gauger administrative staff add RTI to the regular agenda for Faculty Meetings, Student Services Meetings, and Instructional Chair Meetings. Also, I recommend that RTI is included as an agenda item during building level Professional Development days. Including RTI in established rituals will give further credibility to the level of commitment. Finally, I

recommend that the Gauger administrative team celebrate efforts and accomplishments related to school-wide implementation of RTI. This could be accomplished weekly through the “Friday Footnotes”, our weekly e-memo, or monthly through Faculty Meetings. These celebrations would help to embed RTI into the culture of Gauger-Cobbs and provide opportunities to acknowledge the hard-work and successes of staff and students.

Conclusion

In many ways the 6th Grade RTI Pilot did exactly what it was intended to do for the leadership at Gauger-Cobbs. Although far from perfect, the experience provided an opportunity for the team to identify the advantages and disadvantages of a “pull-out” intervention program and provide an opportunity for other staff to gain and provide insight around how RTI should look in the future. The pilot also provided a source of information for the four frame analysis and subsequent development of recommended Leadership Actions to help prepare for school-wide implementation.

Appendix E

EVALUATION OF PALS AND RECIPROCAL TEACHING

Executive Summary

As part of efforts to create a comprehensive school-wide literacy program, Gauger-Cobbs Middle School implemented Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) and Reciprocal Teaching (RT) to support students in need of literacy intervention and enrichment during the 2012-2013 school-year. PALS is collection of three partnered reading activities, during which students alternate between the role of “reader” and “coach”. Utilized to support students in need of intervention, PALS adheres to a strict format and promotes the development of skills related to fluency, identification of subject/main idea, and making predictions. RT is a collaborative process designed to create dialogue between students around a text. Specifically, RT focuses on 4 strategies; Summarizing, Question Generating, Clarifying, and Predicting. Initially teachers are responsible for teaching each skill and facilitating discussion, but over time students assume increasing responsibility. A program evaluation was completed for a sample of six PALS and six RT classrooms investigating the fidelity of implementation and the impact of PALS and RT delivery on reading comprehension. The following evaluation questions were developed to focus the investigation:

Peer Assisted Learning Strategies:

Process Question

Are teachers adhering to the prescribed PALS format?

Outcome Question

Does delivery of PALS result in improved reading comprehension as measured by DCAS?

Reciprocal Teaching

Process Question

Are collaborative student groups utilizing RT strategies to guide discussions?

Outcome Question

Does delivery of RT result in improved reading comprehension as measured by DCAS?

An evaluator created rubric was developed for both PALS and RT to investigate the process question for each strategy. For PALS, investigation revealed that there was some inconsistency in implementation, but generally speaking implementation ranged from partial implementation to full implementation. “Reading Strategies” and “Teacher Engagement” were identified as potential areas of growth and evaluation revealed that scheduling practices negatively impacted the ability of teachers to create the “student pairings” required by PALS. In the case of RT, the rubric examined both “teacher engagement” and “student engagement” finding that implementation was in the partial range for both.

To investigate the outcome question for both PALS and RT the evaluator compared the mean DCAS Reading growth (fall to spring) to the mean classroom implementation score for classroom included in the sample. In each, case findings related to student outcomes failed to provide evidence of a connection between delivery of PALS/RT and improved DCAS performance.

The evaluation concluded with a recommendation to continue use of PALS for intervention purposes and a recommendation to discontinue use of RT.

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Introduction:

Purpose of Evaluation

Entering the 2012-2013 school-year Gauger-Cobbs Middle School restructured the master schedule to allow for a “Literacy Block”. During this time, students scoring below proficiency were assigned to Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies, while students scoring at or above proficiency were assigned to Reciprocal Teaching. While research exists to support the effectiveness of both PALS and RT, it is critical that each is implemented with fidelity. With that in mind, one purpose of this evaluation is to determine if PALS and RT are being delivered as prescribed. Second, the evaluation will seek to determine if the use of PALS and RT result in improved reading comprehension skills. Findings from this evaluation will be utilized to develop recommendations regarding the use of PALS and Reciprocal Teaching during the 2013-2014 school-year.

Organization of the Report

The report begins with an overview of procedures for both PALS and RT. This description is followed by an introduction to the evaluation questions that were developed to focus the investigation. Next the report discusses the methodology, including the sample, instruments, and procedures for both data collection and

analysis. After a review of key findings, the report closes with a discussion of conclusions and recommendations.

Description of the Programs:

Peer Assisted Learning Strategies:

PALS is comprised of three reading strategies that are completed in pairs, following a strict format. Student pairings are based on Lexile scores, with students being rank ordered (by Lexile) and paired as follows:

Partner A	Partner B
1	17
2	18
3	19
4	20
5	21
6	22
7	23
8	24
9	25
10	26
11	27
12	28
13	29
14	30
15	31
16	32

This method of assignment ensures that the ability levels of students are similar enough that they will not become frustrated by differences in abilities. During the first strategy, referred to as “Partner Reading with Retell”, partner A reads aloud for five minutes, while partner B serves as coach, intervening when Partner A struggles with a

word or makes a careless mistake. Students receive training and are provided with “cue cards” to ensure that coaching is positive and supportive. After five minutes have passed, partners will switch roles, with Partner B reading aloud and Partner A serving as coach for the next 5 minutes. With both students having an opportunity to fulfill each role, students will spend the next two minutes “retelling” facts from the passage. Again, Partner A and B will support one another using verbal cues. During “Paragraph Shrinking”, the second PALS strategy, partners A and B alternate roles again. Partner A begins by reading a paragraph, with Partner B serving as coach. Once complete with the paragraph, partner A will “shrink” the paragraph by:

- Identifying the Subject
- Identifying what is important about the subject
- Stating the main idea in 10 words or less

Again, coaches are provided with “cue cards” to help prompt their partners when necessary. Partners A and B will alternate “shrinking” for a total of 10 minutes. The third and final strategy known as “Prediction Relay” incorporates the shrinking described above, but also requires students to make a prediction related to the text. In Prediction Relay, Partner A will (except at the beginning of a text) make a prediction about what they expect to happen next. Following this prediction, they will read half of a page, before stopping to identify if their prediction was accurate and to shrink the text. Partner B will serve as coach prompting students during the shrinking process and coaching students during the read aloud. Partner A will continue to predict, read, and shrink for a total of 5 minutes before switching roles with Partner B for 5 additional minutes.

In its entirety PALS requires a total of 32 minutes, detailed in the table below:

Time	Activity
5 minutes	Partner A reads
5 minutes	Partner B reads
2 minutes	Alternate retelling facts
5 minutes	Partner A paragraph shrinking
5 minutes	Partner B paragraph shrinking
5 minutes	Partner A prediction relay
5 minutes	Partner B prediction relay

The combination of the three PALS strategies allows students to develop skills related to fluency, identifying subject and main idea, and making predictions. Additionally, the intensity of the 32 minutes every other day, will increase reading stamina and help to engrain the PALS strategies. The result of the internalization of the PALS strategies and increased reading stamina will be improved reading comprehension skills and increased student achievement.

Reciprocal Teaching

Designed for use with informational texts, Reciprocal Teaching is a collaborative process in which students assume one of the following roles:

1. Leader (Teacher or Student)
 - Serving as a facilitator, the leader prompts each member of the team to fulfill their responsibility. For example, at the start of an article, the leader would prompt the predictor by saying “Based on the title, the subheadings (if appropriate), bold words, pictures, and

looking at the way the text is set up, what predictions can you make about this passage?”

2. Predict

- The role of the predictor is to draw inferences about the passage based on clues from within the text. When making their predictions, students should reference the clues from within the text. Predictors can revise their predictions as they progress through the text and gain new clues.

3. Clarify

- The role of the clarifier is to make sense of confusing ideas. When needed, the clarifier can ask other members to help locate clues to clarify areas of confusion. For example, the clarifier would prompt the group as follows “The word (or phrase) _____ confuses me. Does anyone else know what it means, can we figure it out, or do we need a dictionary?”

4. Question

- The role of questioner is to develop “teacher questions” or questions that would be used by a teacher to check for understanding. While questions can be of the “right there” variety

they should be of varying levels and should always check for understanding of important information. Possible examples include:

“What does _____ mean?”

“What do you think it means when the author writes _____?”

5. Summarize

- The role of the summarizer is to create a concise summary of the important information from the passage. A good summary does not contain non-essential details.

While these skills must initially be taught to students, eventually students should become familiar with each skill and will be able to rotate through each of the roles.

Evaluation Questions:

To explore the effectiveness of PALS and RT the following evaluation questions were developed:

Peer Assisted Learning Strategies:

Process Question

Are teachers adhering to the prescribed PALS format?

Outcome Question

Does delivery of PALS result in improved reading comprehension as measured by DCAS?

Reciprocal Teaching

Process Question

Are collaborative student groups utilizing the RT strategies to guide discussions?

Outcome Question

Does delivery of RT result in improved reading comprehension as measured by DCAS?

In both the case of PALS and RT, it is critical to examine the process to determine the fidelity of implementation. Implementation fidelity is critical when examining outcome data because one cannot expect strong outcomes if there is little fidelity to the program. At the same time, if implementation is strong and outcomes are poor then one must consider that the program may not be meeting the desired needs. To explore the process question developed for PALS and RT, a random sampling of teachers were selected for observation. For outcome questions, an analysis of DCAS Reading Data was conducted for the randomly sampled sections of PALS and RT, seeking to establish a relationship between implementation fidelity and student achievement.

Methodology:

Sample

Due to time constraints, a sample of the teaching population was selected at random for investigation into the process questions for PALS an RT. In total the sample contains 12 unique teachers, 4 from each grade level; including 2 responsible for the delivery of PALS and 2 responsible for the delivery of RT. Each of the randomly selected teachers was assigned a letter code to track and report data anonymously. Table 25 identifies grade level and literacy assignment of each teacher selected.

Table 25 . Sample by Teacher Code		
Code:	Grade Level:	Literacy Assignment
A	06	RT
B	06	RT
C	06	PALS
D	06	PALS
E	07	RT
F	07	RT
G	07	PALS
H	07	PALS
I	08	RT
J	08	RT
K	08	PALS
L	08	PALS

Although the sample size is small, it is representative of the larger teacher population at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School. Table 26 compares demographical data for the teacher sample and population at Gauger-Cobbs.

Table 26	Teacher Demographics Sample vs. Population			
	Black	White	Male	Female
Sample	17%	83%	25%	75%
Population	22%	77%	28%	72%

To investigate the outcome questions for PALS and RT, I will utilize the students assigned to the classrooms from the process sample to form my outcome sample. While the 12 classrooms represent less than a third of the student body they are representative of the school-wide population. Table 27 compares school-wide demographic data to demographic data for the outcome sample.

Table 27	Comparison of School-Wide and Sample Demographics					
Sample	# of Students	African American	White	Male	Female	Low Income
School-Wide	1,170	40.3%	37.3%	50.6%	49.4%	61.4%
Outcome Sample	305	47%	46%	54%	46%	67%

Instruments

Peer Assisted Learning Strategies

Data used to measure the process, or fidelity of PALS implementation was collected through teacher observation and use of the evaluator created PALS Implementation Rubric. The rubric (see Appendix A) rated classrooms in each of the

following components of PALS: Use of Time, Reading Strategies (Are students doing it correctly?), Teacher Engagement, Use of Incentives, and Student Engagement. Scores ranged from 1 or “No Implementation” to 3 or “Full Implementation” and were issued for all 6 areas included on the rubric. To gather data related to the outcome question, DCAS data was collected for each of the 6 PALS sections included in the sample described above. Data was retrieved from the I-tracker Pro application, operated by the Data Service Center, and was utilized to examine average growth in each of the 6 classrooms.

Reciprocal Teaching

To measure implementation fidelity for RT, teacher observations were completed using the evaluator created RT Implementation Rubric (see Appendix B). The rubric rated teachers and students in the following areas: teacher engagement (before, during, & after the cycle), and student engagement in the strategies of predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing. For each component staff or students were assigned an implementation score based on observations. Scores ranged from 1 or “No Implementation” to 3 or “Full Implementation” and were assigned all components. To gather data related to the outcome question, DCAS data was collected for each of the 6 RT sections included in the sample described above. Data was retrieved from the I-tracker Pro application, operated by the Data Service Center, and was utilized to examine average growth in each of the 6 classrooms.

Data Collection Procedures

Process Questions

To gather data related to the process question for PALS and RT, I visited each of the 12 classrooms identified above (6 PALS/ 6 RT) and observed two full sessions. Observations were completed during the months of April and May and were recorded manually using the evaluation rubrics for PALS and RT. PALS classrooms earned a score in each of the five categories, ranging from 1 (No implementation) to 3 (Full Implementation). RT classrooms were rated on both teacher and student engagement during the RT cycle (see Appendix B). Teachers were rated on 7 criteria for engagement before, during, and after the RT student cycle. On the other hand, students were rated on their ability to complete the following RT strategies: Predicting, Questioning, Clarifying, and Summarizing. As was the case with the PALS scoring ranged from 1 (No implementation) to 3 (Full Implementation).

Outcome Questions

Data related to the outcome questions for PALS and RT was collected through administration of DCAS. In total there were three administration, one occurring in the fall window (October) and two occurring in the spring window (April/May). Students were assigned the higher of the two spring scores, providing two data points and the opportunity to measure growth from fall to spring.

Data Analysis Procedures:

Implementation Data

To analyze the data collected through the PALS implementation rubric, a data table was developed containing the mean scores for each area of implementation by teacher. This table is presented in the results section and was helpful in identifying areas of strength and areas of growth related to PALS implementation. For RT, the implementation rubric included criteria that measured both “teacher engagement” and “student engagement”, thus it was helpful during analysis to organize observations based in this manner. As a result, two tables were created, one for “teacher engagement” criteria and one for “student engagement” criteria. These tables, presented in the results section, were also utilized to identify trends in implementation fidelity for RT.

Achievement Data

To analyze the impact of PALS and RT implementation, a data table was created for each program comparing the mean growth (fall to spring) to the mean classroom implementation score for classroom included in the sample. This data was analyzed to identify relationships between implementation fidelity and student achievement.

Results:

Findings

Peer Assisted Learning Strategies

For PALS, classroom observations conducted with the implementation rubric identified inconsistent fidelity of implementation across the sample. Table 4 (see appendix 1.A) compares fidelity of implementation for sampled classrooms, including a mean implementation score for each rubric item and a mean classroom implementation score. The mean classroom implementation score is the mean of scores for the five rubric areas and is a measure of overall implementation fidelity. As it relates to the process question, all but one of the sample classrooms was identified as being in “partial implementation” or “full implementation”. In terms of mean item scores for the sample classrooms, “Use of Time” and “Use of Incentives” were strong aspects of implementation for 2012-2013. On the other hand “Reading Strategies” and “Teacher Engagement” scored lower on the rubric and are areas of growth. To explore the student outcomes associated with PALS, the evaluator examined the relationship between the mean classroom implementation score, and mean student growth from fall to spring. Table 5 (see appendix 1.A) provides an overview of student outcome data for the PALS sample. In terms of outcomes there is an inconsistent relationship between the assigned classroom implementation score and the mean fall to spring DCAS growth of sample classrooms. For example, classroom D earned a score of 2.7

for the mean classroom implementation score and produced mean growth of 22.9 points, while classroom K produced mean growth of 26.5, while earning a classroom implementation score of 1.8. This is just one example of the inconsistencies captured in table 5.

Reciprocal Teaching

Fidelity to implementation of RT was examined through use of the RT implementation rubric, which examined both teacher and student “engagement”. Table 6 (see Appendix 1.B) compares fidelity of implementation for the RT sample, including mean implementation scores for each rubric item, as well as the mean classroom implementation score. As it relates to implementation of RT, the data contained in table 6 suggest that teacher engagement and fidelity to the program is on the high end of the rubric, with all but one class earning a score on the high end of partial implementation or above. Also, teacher engagement related to pre-cycle and post-cycle activities (preparing/chunking the article, reviewing goals or strategies, and completing a comprehension check) was a strong point of implementation. Teacher engagement during the cycle (circulation, feedback, and prompting) was strong for the majority of the sample, but was an area of growth for some of the sample staff. As for student engagement and fidelity, table 7 (see Appendix 1.B) presents mean implementation scores for each of the criteria related to student engagement, as well as a mean classroom implementation score. In terms of student engagement, review of table 7 reveals that scores associated with student engagement and fidelity were lower than scores for teacher engagement. That being said, mean scores for both criteria and

strategies were in the partial implementation category for all areas measured by the rubric. While the table suggest that there is room for growth around all of the RT strategies, questioning had the lowest mean strategy score and lowest mean scores for criteria. To assess the impact of RT on student outcomes, the evaluator examined the relationship between the mean classroom implementation score and mean student DCAS growth from fall to spring, which is summarized in table 8 (see Appendix 1.B). For RT, the relationship between the mean classroom implementation score and the mean DCAS growth value for RT is inconclusive. In fact, the difference between the largest mean growth value and the smallest mean growth value was only 11.6 points. From a teacher engagement perspective, this is not surprising as the implementation scores were near the top end of partial implementation or full implementation for all but one classroom. From the student engagement perspective, one might be tempted to claim a relationship as mean growth was more closely aligned with mean classroom implementation scores; however, with mean growth values so tightly clustered, it is hard to assign small differences to the impact of RT.

Discussion of Findings:

Peer Assisted Learning Strategies

Process Question:

As it relates to fidelity of implementation, the evaluation of PALS produced several findings for consideration by the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team. First, while the determination of mean classroom implementation scores reveals that the fidelity of PALS implementation varies slightly from classroom to classroom, the majority of classrooms are in the partial implementation stage. Second, the evaluation identified “Student Engagement” and “Reading Strategies” as a potential focus for professional development activities, should use of PALS continue, as some teachers in the sample scored lower in these areas. One important point of discussion related to implementation fidelity was the scheduling of students into PALS. As PALS was designated for intervention, students were assigned based on their DCAS score; with 1’s and 2’s being placed into PALS. However, students were loaded by instructional scale score resulting in rosters with little variance in reading ability. This eliminated the possibility to pair partners as described by developers of PALS and as described earlier in the program description. While this was out of the control of teachers, it was a clear deviation from the PALS process.

Outcome Questions:

As it relates to student outcomes, the evaluation was unable to determine the impact of PALS on DCAS growth. There are two important points of discussion related to the outcome question. First, as described above, the scheduling of students for PALS ignored a significant aspect of the strategy, which was partnering students of different reading abilities. While there is no way to determine the exact impact of this practice, it is likely to have impacted student outcomes. Second, because all “intervention” students were involved in PALS, there is no comparison group to determine if the growth experienced by PALS was above or below expected outcomes. Instead the evaluation produced a set of mean growth values without a frame of reference to help produce meaning.

Reciprocal Teaching

Process Question:

In terms of fidelity to the RT process, the rubric examined both “Teacher Engagement” and “Student Engagement” and produced several important findings from both groups. For teacher engagement, scores were consistently on the high end of the rubric, with all but one of the sample classroom earning partial or full implementation. Generally speaking, teachers scored highly in all areas of the rubric. However, if professional development efforts were to continue, use of the rubric revealed that some teachers need support around “Feedback” and “Prompting”. For students, use of the rubric revealed several findings. First, student engagement in the

RT strategies was less consistent than teacher engagement, but score were mostly in the partial implementation range. Second, the criteria associated with questioning earned the lowest scores on the rubric, and suggest that students continue to struggle in developing inferential questions, identifying the most important information, and citing text when responding to questions. If professional development efforts were to continue, this could be incorporated into professional development related to feedback and prompting.

Outcome Question:

To determine the relationship between student outcomes and RT implementation, the evaluator compared the “Mean Growth (Fall to Spring)” to the “Mean Classroom Implementation Score” for the RT sample. As was the case with PALS, the evaluation was unable to determine the relationship between RT and student outcomes. One factor that may have contributed is the make-up of RT rosters. As was the case with PALS, RT rosters were assigned based in instructional scale scores. As a result, rosters were likely to be comprised of all 3’s or all 4’s, which could certainly “muddy” the relationship between implementation fidelity and growth. For example, a classroom of 4’s might be expected to show less growth then a classroom of 3’s, and thus a teacher with higher implementation fidelity could have a lower mean growth value. A second factor, which is similar to PALS, is the lack of a comparison group. All 3’s and 4’s were placed into RT and thus there was no group of similar students for comparison purposes.

Recommendations:

As indicated at the beginning of this artifact, the purpose was to determine if PALS and RT were being implemented with fidelity and to determine if the use of PALS and RT resulted in increases student achievement. Additionally, any findings were to be utilized in the development of recommendations for 2013-2014 planning purposes. That said, I have developed the following recommendations for consideration by the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team. First, Gauger-Cobbs should discontinue the use of Reciprocal Teaching for enrichment purposes during the school-wide literacy block or any other chunk of time. While the strategies associated with RT are important, many of Gauger's 3's and 4's already possess these skills. Additionally, roll-out of Common Core will place a greater emphasis on literacy in all content areas and the acquisition of these types of skills. Second, the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team should consider the use of PALS as a tier 2 intervention for 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students in need of additional support. This intervention could be delivered through English Language Arts classrooms during the first 35 minutes of each "even" day or through a "Pull-out" model working with small groups of students (1 and 2's) outside of the classroom. While the relationship between use of PALS and increased student achievement was unable to be established through this evaluation, the scheduling of students by instructional scale score was identified as a major departure from the PALS structure. The use of PALS, particularly through ELA classes, would allow for increased fidelity related to student pairings and provide the opportunity for improved outcomes. Third, the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team

should provide continued professional development to support PALS, with activities targeting “Student Engagement” and “Reading Strategies”, assuming the above recommendation is accepted. Finally, the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team should increase the volume of classroom walk-throughs and the frequency with which specific feedback is provided to teachers. While the purpose of this evaluation was to determine the fidelity of implementation and the impact on student outcomes of both PALS and RT, a parallel process in which teachers received frequent feedback would likely have improved implementation this past year and would be a good support for any initiatives this current year.

Conclusion:

Overall the investigation into the “process” of implementing PALS and RT proved to be the most beneficial aspect of the evaluation. For PALS, the evaluation revealed that implementation fidelity was generally in the partial to full implementation range and teachers were adhering to the PALS structure as a whole. “Reading Strategies” and “Teacher Engagement” were identified as potential areas of growth for future use and could be supported by professional development or frequent feedback from classroom visits. Additionally, reflection and discussion around implementation revealed that the largest departure from fidelity was the result of master scheduling practices, rather than efforts of the classroom teacher. Specifically, the practice of scheduling students by instructional scale score prevented teachers from pairing students as recommended by the developers of PALS. Finally, the evaluator recommended that the Gauger-Cobbs continue the use of PALS in the 2013-2014 school-year to support struggling readers; making adjustments to scheduling practices to better support implementation fidelity. For RT, implementation fidelity was examined through the lens of “teacher engagement” and “student engagement”, and was found to be in the partial implementation range from both perspectives. As was the case with PALS, the evaluation was unable to identify a relationship between use of RT and improved student outcomes, but unlike PALS, the evaluator has recommended that Gauger-Cobbs discontinue the use of RT for enrichment purposes. This recommendation is based on the belief that students are likely to either possess these skills already or will gain exposure to them through Common Core

implementation. In the end, evaluation of PALS and RT provided an important opportunity to reflect on 2012-2013 literacy efforts at Gauger-Cobbs and to develop recommendations for the future efforts.

APPENDIX E.1 PALS Evaluation Data

Table 28 Mean Implementation Score by Teacher (PALS)						
Teacher	Use of Time	Reading Strategies	Teacher Engagement	Use of Incentives	Student Engagement	Mean Classroom Implementation Score
C	3	2	3	2	2	2.4
D	2.5	2	3	3	3	2.7
G	3	3	3	3	3	3
H	2	2	2	2	2	2
K	3	2	1	1	2	1.8
L	3	3	3	3	3	3
Mean Item Score	2.75	2.33	2.5	2.8	2.6	N/A

* Note: Values for Rubric Items are Mean Scores from two classroom visits*

Table 29 Student Growth Data for PALS				
Teacher/Grade	Literacy Assignment	# of Students	Mean Growth (Fall to Spring)	Mean Classroom Implementation Score
C/6	PALS	23	39.5	2.4
D/6	PALS	21	22.9	2.7
G/7	PALS	22	38.0	3
H/7	PALS	22	39.0	2
K/8	PALS	25	26.5	1.8
L/8	PALS	24	42.4	3

Appendix E.2- RT Evaluation Data

Table 30 Teacher Engagement - Mean Implementation Score by Teacher (RT)								
Teacher	Preparation	Checking	Review of Goals Procedures	Circulation	Feedback	Prompting	Co mp Check	Mean Classroom Implementation Score
A	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
B	3	3	3	3	1	1	3	2.7
E	2	2	2	2.5	1	1	2	1.7
F	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	2.7
I	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	2.9
J	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2.9
Mean Item Score	2.83	2.83	2.5	2.75	2.3	2.2	2.83	N/A

* Note: Values for Rubric Items are Mean Scores from two classroom visits*

Table 31 Student Engagement - Mean Implementation Score by Teacher (RT)

	A	B	E	F	I	J	Mean Criteria Score	Mean Strategy Score
Predicting	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.5
Citing Text	2	2	1	5	3	3	2.41	N/A
Revise	3	3	1.5	2	3	3	2.6	N/A
Questioning	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.08
Level	2	2	1.5	2	2	3	2.08	N/A
Topic	2	2	1.5	2	2	3	2.08	N/A
Cite Text	2	2	1.5	2	2	3	2.08	N/A
Clarifying	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.42
Word Identification	3	3	1.5	3	3	3	2.75	N/A
- Strategy Identification	2	2	1.5	2	2	3	2.08	N/A
Summarizing	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	2.30
- Main Idea	2	2	1.5	3	3	2	2.25	N/A
- Key Details	2	2	1.5	3	3	3	2.4	N/A
- Summary	2	2	1.5	2	3	3	2.25	N/A
Mean Classroom Implementation Score	2.2	2.2	1.5	2.4	2.6	2.9	2.25	N/A

Table 32 Student Growth Data Reciprocal Teaching

Classroom/Grade	Literacy Assignment	# of Students	Mean Growth (Fall to Spring)	Mean Classroom Implementation Score	Teacher	Student
A/6	RT	29	36.4	3		2.2
B/6	RT	30	38.6	2.7		2.2
E/7	RT	33	34.2	1.7		1.5
F/7	RT	33	44.6	2.7		2.4
I/8	RT	22	40.2	2.9		2.6
J/8	RT	29	45.8	2.9		2.9

Appendix E.3 PALS Implementation Rubric

Teacher: _____

Observer: _____

Date/Block _____

PALS Implementation Rubric

	No Implementation	Partial Implementation	Full Implementation
Score	1	2	3
Use of Time	No time is allotted for partnered reading strategies.	Time is allotted for partnered reading strategies, but does not match the prescribed PALS format (see below).	Time allotted for partnered reading strategies is in alignment with prescribed PALS format (see below).
Reading Strategies	Partnered Reading Strategies utilized correctly by less than 25% of student pairings.	Partnered reading strategies utilized correctly by 25% - 70% of student pairings.	Partnered reading strategies utilized correctly by greater than 70% of student pairings.
Teacher Engagement	Teacher circulation occurs less than 25% of the time during partnered reading strategies.	Teacher circulation occurs 25% - 70% of the time during partnered reading strategies.	Teacher circulation occurs greater than 70% of the time during partnered reading strategies.
Use of Incentives	Teacher rewards on task behavior less than 25% of observed opportunities.	Teachers rewards on task behavior 25% - 70% of observed opportunities.	Teacher rewards on task behavior greater than 70% of observed opportunities.
Student Engagement	Less than 25% of student actively engaged in partnered reading activities.	25% - 70% of students actively engaged in partnered reading activities.	Greater than 70% of students actively engaged in partnered reading activities.

Prescribed PALS Format

Time	Activity
5 minutes	Partner A reads
5 minutes	Partner B reads
2 minutes	Alternate retelling facts
5 minutes	Partner A paragraph shrinking
5 minutes	Partner B paragraph shrinking
5 minutes	Partner A prediction relay
5 minutes	Partner B prediction relay

Appendix E.4: RT Implementation Rubrics

Teacher: _____

Observer: _____

Date/Block _____

RT Teacher Engagement Rubric

	No Implementation	Partial Implementation	Full Implementation
Criteria	1	2	3
The daily article is grade level appropriate	No article is prepared.	Article is prepared, but not grade level appropriate.	The article is prepared and is grade level appropriate.
The daily article is appropriately chunked	No article is prepared.	Article is prepared, but not appropriately chunked.	Article is prepared and is appropriately chunked.
The teacher reviews goals and or specific procedures for RT prior to initiating the RT cycle	No – Need for review was evident to observer.	No – Need for review was not evident to observer	Yes – Goals and Specific Procedures were reviewed prior to initiating the RT cycle.
The teacher circulates supporting team leaders when necessary	Circulation occurred for less than 25% of the RT cycle.	Circulation occurred between 25% and 75% of the time during the RT cycle.	Circulation occurred greater than 75% of the time during the RT cycle.
The teacher interrupts the RT Cycle to highlight to provide feedback regarding common problem or to recognize student contributions.	Feedback related to common problems or student contributions occurs less than 25% of opportunities.	Feedback related to common problems or student contributions occurs between 25% and 75% of opportunities.	Feedback related to common problems or student contributions occurs greater than 75% of the time.

The teacher conducts a comprehension check.	No comprehension check occurred.	N/A	A comprehension check occurred.
---	----------------------------------	-----	---------------------------------

Teacher: _____
 Observer: _____
 Date/Block _____

RT Student Engagement Rubric

	No Implementation	Partial Implementation	Full Implementation
Criteria	1	2	3
Predicting – Students cite evidence from the text to support their claims.	Evidence from the text is utilized to support student claims less than 25% of the time.	Evidence from the text is utilized to support student claims between 25% and 75% of the time.	Evidence from the text is utilized to support student claims greater than 75% of the time.
Predicting – Students revise or confirm their predictions following each chunk.	Students revise or confirm their predictions 25% of the time following a chunk.	Students revise or confirm their predictions between 25% and 75% of the time following a chunk.	Students revise or confirm their predictions greater than 90% of the time following a chunk.
Questioning – Students ask level 2 questions (inference) or above in addition to appropriate level 1 (literal) questions.	Students ask level 2 questions less than 25% of the time.	Students ask level 2 questions between 25% and 75% of the time.	Students ask level 2 questions greater than 90% of the time.
Questioning – Students ask questions about the most important information.	Students ask questions about the most important information less than 25% of the time.	Students ask questions about the most important information between 25% and 75% of the time.	Students ask questions about the most important information between greater than 75% of the time.
Questioning – Students cite the text when answering questions.	Students cite the text when answering questions less than 25% of the time.	Students cite the text when answering questions between 25% and 75 of the time.	Students cite the text when answering questions greater than 75% of the time.

RT Student Engagement Rubric

	No Implementation	Partial Implementation	Full Implementation
Criteria	1	2	3
Clarifying – Students identify words that they do not understand or will confuse others.	Students identify words that they do not understand or will confuse others less than 25% of the time.	Students identify words that they do not understand or will confuse others between 25% and 75% of the time.	Students identify words that they do not understand or will confuse others greater than 75% of the time.
Clarifying – Students identify different strategies to clarify confusing words or ideas.	Students identify different strategies to clarify confusing words or ideas less than 25% of the time.	Students identify different strategies to clarify confusing words or ideas between 25% and 75% of the time.	Students identify different strategies to clarify confusing words or ideas greater than 75% of the time.
Summarizing – Students identify the main idea.	Students identify the main idea less than 25% of the time.	Students identify the main idea between 25% and 75% of the time.	Students identify the main idea greater than 75% of the time.
Summarizing – Students identify the key details.	Students identify the key details less than 25% of the time.	Students identify the key details between 25% and 75% of the time.	Students identify the key details greater than 75% of the time.
Summarizing – Students draft a concise summary.	Students identify the key details less than 25% of the time.	Students identify the key details between 25% and 75% of the time.	Students identify the key details greater than 75% of the time.

Appendix F
LITERACY E-BOOK

Introduction:

In preparation for the 2012-2013 school-year a literacy block was included in the master schedule to allow for school-wide delivery of intervention and enrichment. This process placed many staff in the unfamiliar role of delivery literacy of interventions and tracking student progress through use of I-tracker. As a result, it did not take long for the need to emerge for a document to support delivery of specific interventions, the use of progress monitoring tools, and the data entry process through I-tracker. In an attempt to provide clarity around these topics, an electronic “Literacy Intervention Handbook” (Artifact F) was created. Based on feedback from the RTI committee, the following topics were identified for inclusion: Review of Research (RTI Specific), Review of Gauger Literacy Data, Overview of Interventions and Progress Monitoring Tools, I-Tracker Pro Tutorial, and Additional Resources (includes professional development activities and resources from program developers when applicable). The following are the slides (without links) from the Literacy Intervention Handbook.

GAUGER-COBBS MIDDLE SCHOOL

Literacy Intervention Handbook
2012-2013

Table of Contents:

- Review of Research
 - Slide 3
- Gauger Literacy Data Review
 - Slide 8
- Interventions and Progress Monitoring Tools
 - Slide 14
- I-Tracker Pro Tutorial
 - Slide 16
- Additional Resources
 - Slide 23

REVIEW OF RESEARCH:

In a separate report from the [Alliance for Excellent Education, Biancarosa & Snow](#) report that an estimated 32% of high-school graduates are not prepared for college English composition courses and that 40% of high-school graduates do not have the literacy skills required by employers (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). To make matters worse NAEP data related to secondary literacy has been “flat” since the creation of NAEP in the 1970’s. However, as Heller and Greenleaf suggest, these results are not entirely surprising as efforts to improve literacy have often focused on the elementary level; with conventional thinking being that efforts targeting secondary school students were too little too late (Heller & Greenleaf, 2007).

In a separate report from the [Alliance for Excellent Education, Biancarosa & Snow](#) report that an estimated 32% of high-school graduates are not prepared for college English composition courses and that 40% of high-school graduates do not have the literacy skills required by employers (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). To make matters worse NAEP data related to secondary literacy has been “flat” since the creation of NAEP in the 1970’s. However, as Heller and Greenleaf suggest, these results are not entirely surprising as efforts to improve literacy have often focused on the elementary level; with conventional thinking being that efforts targeting secondary school students were too little too late (Heller & Greenleaf, 2007).

Despite the lack of focus on literacy instruction at the secondary level, there is research available to guide the practice of schools. In their report entitled "Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy", authors Biancaraso and Snow identify "The Fifteen Key Elements of Effective Literacy Programs". These elements were based on literacy research and professional opinion of the "Reading Next" panel members. The authors identify each element as either an "instructional" or "infrastructure improvement", but emphasize that a blend of multiple elements is expected to yield the best returns. Table 1 displays each of the key elements and the category to which they were assigned (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006).

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Table 1: Key Elements of Effective Secondary Literacy Programs

1. Direct, explicit comprehension instruction	9. Ongoing formative assessment
2. Effective instructional principals embedded in content	10. Extended time for literacy
3. Motivation and self-directed learning	11. Professional Development
4. Text-Based collaborative learning	12. Ongoing summative assessments of students and programs
5. Strategic Tutoring	13. Teacher teams
6. Diverse Text	14. Leadership
7. Intensive Writing	15. A comprehensive and coordinated literacy program
8. A technology component	

REVIEW OF GAUGER LITERACY DATA

1998 to 2010

A review of literacy data for Gauger-Cobbs Middle School reveals that Gauger may be slightly better off than other secondary schools, at least compared to the flat NAEP data. A review of Gauger's data from the Delaware State Testing Program (DSTP) shows moderate gains over the life of the assessment, although some "peaks and valleys" were present. Chart 1 displays DSTP trend data from 1998 for both Gauger and Christina School District 8th graders.

Chart 1: DSTP 8th Grade Literacy Data 1998 to 2012

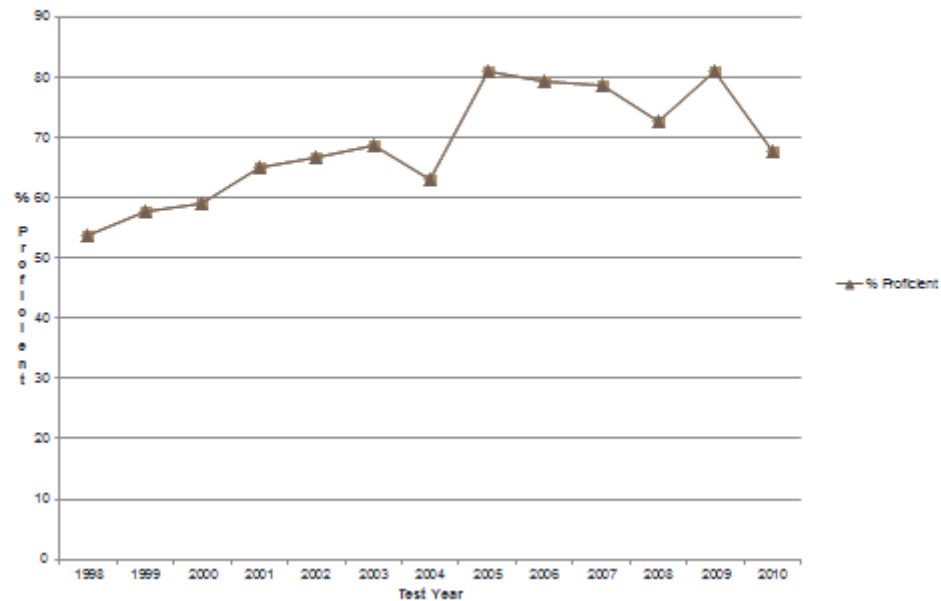
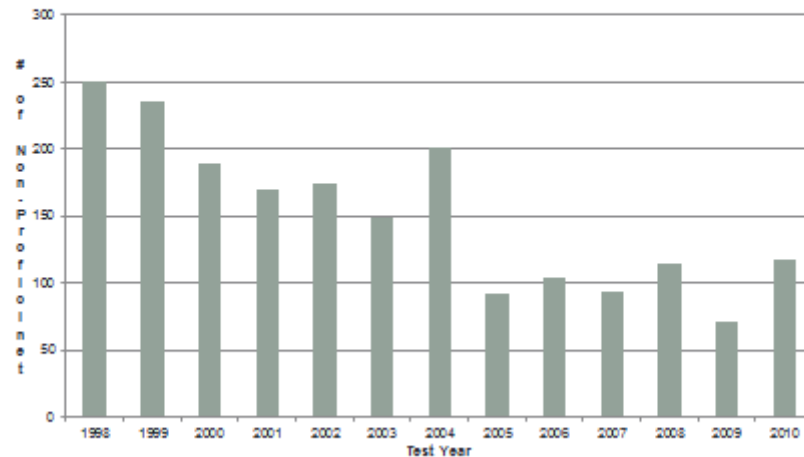
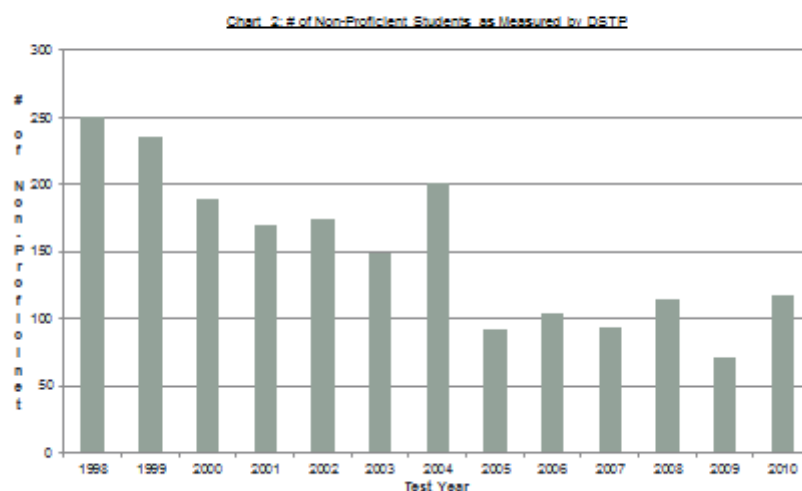


Chart 2: # of Non-Proficient Students as Measured by DSTP



In 2010-2011 the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS), a more rigorous computer based assessment replaced the DSTP. With only two years of data it is difficult to draw any conclusion from DCAS scores, however there was a 14% increase in proficiency from 2010-2011 (54%) to 2011-2012 (69%) for Gauger's 8th grade students. Although DSTP results show growth over time, peaking at 81.05 % proficient in 2009, the issue of literacy instruction becomes more pressing when viewed through the lens of non-proficiency. Chart 2 displays the number of non-proficient students each year over the course of DSTP testing.



As a result of the growth displayed in Table 1 there was a steady decline in the number of non-proficient students from 1998 to 2005, minus a few spikes. However, from 2005 to 2010 decreases flattened with nearly 100 students scoring non-proficient each year. From this perspective, there is a clear need for more a more intense efforts around literacy at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School.

INTERVENTIONS AND PROGRESS MONITORING TOOLS

Table 2: Interventions and Monitoring Tools for 2012-2013

Intervention /Tier	Skills Addressed	Progress Monitoring Tool
PALS – 2 or 3	Fluency, Comprehension, & Vocabulary	Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)/CBM Maze
Read 180 – 3	Fluency, Vocabulary, Word Identification, & Spelling	SRI and Program Features
System 44 – 3	Phonics & Phonemic Awareness	SRI and Program Features
Achieve 3000 – 2 or 3	Vocabulary & Comprehension	SRI
Teacher Created Materials (Targeted Reading Intervention) – 2 or 3	Comprehension & Vocabulary	Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)/CBM Maze
Read Naturally Encore – 2 or 3	Fluency & Vocabulary	Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)/CBM Maze

I-TRACKER PRO SUPPORT

Logging Into I-Tracker Pro:

- Step 1: From the Staff Tab (Christina School District Homepage) select DSC – Data Service Center.
- Step 2: Click on www.dataservice.org (see screen shot) in the upper left hand corner.

The screenshot shows the Staff Portal interface. At the top is an orange header bar with the text "Staff Portal" and a stylized logo. Below the header, on the left, is the text "DSC - DATA SERVICE CENTER" followed by a bulleted link: "[www.dataservice.org](\"http://www.dataservice.org\")". A large black arrow points to this link. Below this, under the heading "Specific Applications:", there is a bulleted list of links: "[Absence Request \(Vacation, Personal, PD\)](\"#\")", "[Change Preferences / Password](\"#\")", "[Professional Leave / Travel Request](\"#\")", and "[Reported Time Payroll](\"#\")". On the right side of the screenshot is a vertical menu with several options: "eSchoolPLUS", "IMS - Identity Mgmt. System", "District Webmail", "CSD Web Applications", "DSC - Data Service Center" (which is highlighted with a blue background and a horizontal line above it), and "IEP Plus Login".

Logging Into I-Tracker Pro:

- Step 3: Once redirected, login using your network. (The same information you use to login to your e-mail account) username and password. (see screen shot) Be sure to select Christina from the drop down.

Welcome to the Data Service Center

The [Data Service Center](#) (DSC) provides [school districts](#), large and small, with information processing, [application development](#), [training](#) and [support services](#). For more than 25 years, DSC has worked closely with our clients to develop applications specifically addressing their data collection, processing, and reporting needs. Taking advantage of the power of the Internet, DSC created a suite of easy-to-use, reliable, and affordable web-based applications that meet the ever-growing demands of schools and districts. The most significant benefits of using DSC are attributable to the personalized services and support we provide to our clients. DSC offers high quality training and timely support to all schools and districts utilizing our services and products.

DATA SERVICE CENTER

Online Applications Designed by Delaware Educators for Delaware Educators

- I-Tracker Pro
- Professional Development
- Absence Request
- Personnel Attendance
- Referral Action Profile - Online Teacher Referrals

NEWS

Data Service Center is looking for an experienced ASP.NET Web Developer to join our development team.

Data Service Center (DSC) is looking for an experienced

Logging Into I-Tracker Pro:

- Step 4: Select I-Tracker Pro from the Application Menu

DSC Web Applications » Main Menu ||||

Web Application Bulletins

Welcome to the DSC web accessible applications. Any questions about the system should be directed to the Helpdesk@dataservice.org.

Select an Application

- Absence Request (Vacation, Personal, PD)
- Administrative Documents
- DPAS & Walkthrough
- I-Tracker Pro
- Reported Time Payroll
- Student Truancy Tracking
- Change Preferences/Password
- Log-Off System

Progress Monitoring Data Entry:

- Step 1: Select "Progress Monitoring Data Entry" from the I-Tracker Pro Main Page (see screen shot)

DSC I-Tracker Pro - Main Menu School Year 2012/2013 Quick Search:

Teacher

1. Student Detail
2. View My Intervention Groups
3. View My Students with Intervention Plans
4. View My Classes/Data Dashboards
5. View Student Data Updates
6. Curriculum Progress Monitoring
7. Progress Monitoring Data Entry
8. Benchmark Data Entry
9. Refer Student for Intervention

Admin

1. Setup Intervention Groups
2. Assessment Triangle Report
3. Academic Triangle Report
4. Curriculum Triangle Report

Benchmark

1. DIBELS Subtest Report
2. DIBELS Benchmark Growth Summary
3. DIBELS Next Subtest Report
4. DIBELS Next Growth Summary By Class
5. DIBELS Next Growth Summary By Grade
6. DCAS Growth Summary By Class
7. DCAS Growth Summary By Grade
8. DCAS Avg Scores by Class
9. DCAS Subtest Report
10. AYP - DCAS Summary By Cell
11. AYP - DCAS Growth Summary By Cell (Growth Model)
12. STAR Growth Summary By Class
13. STAR Reading Growth Summary By Grade
14. STAR Math Growth Summary By Grade
15. STAR EL Growth Summary By Grade
16. MAP Subtest Report

Progress Monitoring Data Entry:

- Step 2: Select "Intervention Group" from class/homeroom dropdown, then select the appropriate Progress Monitoring Tool from the drop down, and then select the Progress Monitoring Date. (see screen shot)

Score By Group - Progress Monitoring

Teacher:

Class/Homeroom:

Progress Monitoring Tool:

Progress Monitoring Date:

Progress Monitoring History for selected class

No Progress Monitoring history available for selected Class.

Progress Monitoring Data Entry:

- Step 3: Select "Add Progress Monitoring Group" and enter the appropriate data. Click "Save Scores" to Record.


Score By Group - Progress Monitoring

Teacher Name: Bowman

Course Title: Intervention Group: Literacy Intervention (1089-13)

Assessment: Behavior Progress Monitoring

Assessment Date: 10/14/2012



Name	Gr	ID	Rate (%) (max 100)	Duration	Frequency	Latency (seconds)	Locus	Grade Level
Alvares Ortiz, Juan	06	669356	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	06 ▾
Calloway, Raelin	06	322188	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	06 ▾
Carrere, Samuel	06	047530	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	06 ▾
Fauntleroy, Yasmeen	06	237076	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	06 ▾

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies

- [Student Training PowerPoint](#)
- [Student Guide](#)
- [PALS Point Card](#)
- [Directions for ORF through PALS](#)

Read 180 & System 44

- [Read 180 Website](#)
- [System 44 Website](#)
- [Research Synopsis – What Works Clearing House](#)

Achieve 3000

- [Lexile Study](#)
- [Research to Practice](#)

Teacher Created Materials - Targeted Reading Intervention

- [TCM Website](#)
- [TCM Research](#)

Read Naturally Encore

- [Read Naturally Encore Website](#)
- [Read Naturally Encore – How To...](#)
- [Teacher's Manual](#)

Appendix G

MASTER SCHEDULE REFLECTION

Introduction:

In their discussion about effective literacy programs at the secondary level, Biancarosa & Snow identify “Teacher Teams” and “Extended Time for Literacy” as key elements (Biancarosa, & Snow, 2006). Specifically, the authors highlight the importance of “student cohorts” and the opportunity for teachers to have conversations around shared students. Prior to the 2012-2013 school-year, “teaming” was a cornerstone of Gauger’s academic program, but was sacrificed to allow for more flexibility within the master schedule. In terms of extending time, the authors point out that literacy instruction must be embedded throughout the school day to be truly impactful, not just during a literacy block or ELA class. That being said, the purpose of this artifact is twofold and supports planning for the 2013-2014 school-year. First, the reflection will seek to identify a way to include the entire staff in developing a comprehensive school-wide literacy program. Second, I would like to plan a return to teaming while keeping the positive aspects of the 2012-2013 master schedule. These efforts, in my opinion, are critical to the embedding of school-wide literacy strategies and would assist teachers in planning across content areas.

Description of the 2012-2013 Schedule:

In preparation for the 2012-2013 school-year, significant changes were made to the master schedule to support the following:

- The implementation of a comprehensive school-wide literacy program, including both intervention and enrichment.

- Expansion of Gauger’s RTI program to include 6th through 8th grade, as well as time for Math intervention.

While the major change was the shift from the 4-Block A/B master schedule to a rotating 5-Block A/B master schedule, there were other important changes. Figure 1 provides a comparison of the key elements of the 2011-2012 and the 2012-2013 master schedules.

Figure 3 Master Schedule Comparison	
2011-2012	2012-2013
Four Block A/B Schedule - 90 Minutes per block.	Five Block Day – 66 Minutes per block.
Fixed A/B schedule with every other day having the same cycle of courses.	Rotating schedule with Ten unique “days” in each cycle.
Science and Social Studies offered as semester courses.	Science and Social Studies offered as yearlong courses.
Teaming of students and teachers.	No teaming of students and teachers.
Pull-Out Intervention Program (6th Grade Only)	School-wide Intervention for Reading and Math.
Double –Dose structure for all Math and ELA courses.	Single-Dose classes based on DCAS scores and teacher recommendation.

Purpose of the Reflection:

Reflection is an ongoing and critical process for all teachers and administrators. A critical part of the reflection process is the review of academic, perception, and school-wide discipline data. Based on our data I will determine the effectiveness of changes made to our master schedule and will develop recommendations for next year’s schedule. More specifically, I will be reflecting on the academic and school climate implications of the following:

1. Shortening instructional time for Math, ELA, Social Studies, and Science.
2. Shifting away from teacher and student teams.

3. Offering Science and Social Studies as year-long courses.
4. Implementation of a Rotation Cycle.

To better understand the impact of scheduling changes, I will present and review the following to guide reflection and develop recommendations:

- DCAS Trend Data
- Analysis of allotted Instructional Time (2011 - 2012 v. 2012 - 2013)
- School Climate Survey Data (2011 - 2012 v. 2012 - 2013)
- School-Wide Discipline Data (2011 - 2012 v. 2012 - 2013)
- Master Scheduling Staff Survey Data

Review of Data:

DCAS Trends

As schools are in the business of educating, the most critical and scrutinized set of data relates to achievement. For the purposes of this reflection, I will be comparing DCAS data from the 2011 – 2012 and 2012 – 2013 school years. To understand the impact of changes on student achievement, I examined the following:

- Mean Instructional Scores for Gauger students compared to the district and state for Math, ELA, Social Studies, & Science. (See Appendix A)
- Mean Instructional Scores for Gauger students (by sub-group) compared to the district and state for Math, & ELA. (See Appendix A.1)

The review of data contained in Appendix A produced the following observations:

- In reading, mean instructional scores were higher for 6th and 7th graders in 2012 -2013 and the gap between the Gauger and the state narrowed compared to 2011-2012. For 8th grade, there was a 5 point drop in the mean instructional score and the gap between Gauger and the state increased by 7 points.
- For reading, there was a general upward trend at the building (except 8th), district, and state level. The decrease in 8th grade achievement followed a large spike in achievement by last year's 8th grade group.
- For math, the mean instructional score decreased for 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students at Gauger, and while this mirrored a larger trend for the district and state, it is concerning as math has been historically been a strength at Gauger.
- For Social Studies, the mean instructional score has decreased with each administration and Gauger is now behind the district and state in achievement.
- For Science, the mean instructional score has flattened and Gauger is performing slightly above the district mean, but below the state.

The review of subgroup data, presented in Appendix A.1, identified the following trends:

- In grades 6 and 7, the mean instructional score increased for all student sub-groups in reading with the exception of the 7th grade ELL sub-group from 2011-2012 to 2012 – 2013.
- For 8th grade, the mean instructional score in reading decreased for all sub-groups, with the exception of the special education cell from 2011-2012 to 2012 – 2013. However, mean instructional scores were still significantly higher than 2010 – 2011 scores.
- For math mean scale scores fell for the vast majority of sub-groups across all grade levels from 2011 – 2012, and while scores are still higher than 2010 – 2011, this data supports the need to revisit the master schedule.

Analysis of Instructional Time

To allow for the inclusion of a school-wide literacy block, the Gauger administrative team shifted from a 4 block to a 5 block day. As a result, the length of the block for core and expressive arts classes changed from 84 minutes to 66 minutes. Table 33 compares the total instructional time allotted for Math, ELA, Social Studies, Science, & Expressive Arts/Career and Technical (CTE) Courses.

Table 33 Analysis of Instructional Time by Content Area (2011 – 2012 v 2012 – 2013)				
Subject Area:	2011 – 2012	2012 – 2013	Difference per Week	Difference per Year
Math	420	330	- 90	- 3240
ELA	420	330	- 90	- 3240
Social Studies	210	165	- 45	- 1620
Science	210	165	- 45	- 1620
Expressive Arts/CTE	105	82.5	-22.5	- 810
Literacy Block	N/A	165	+ 165	+1620

Note: Instructional Time is reported in Average Minutes per Week

While the loss of instructional time was concerning to the administrative team, the need to provide intervention opportunities for struggling students and allow for school-wide implementation of RTI was given priority. However, in conjunction with DCAS trend data presented above, I have identified the following concerns:

- For Math, the mean instructional score decreased in all three grade levels, after two years of solid growth school-wide. It seems reasonable that lost instructional time was a factor, as staffing remained relatively unchanged.
- For ELA, the mean instructional score increased for 6th and 7th grade, despite the reduced instructional time.
- For both Science and Social Studies, the mean instructional score dropped in 2012 – 2013. While it seems reasonable to assume that lost instructional time was a factor, it is important to note that the

mean instructional score dropped the previous year with increased instructional time.

School Climate & Discipline Data

Another important set of data for reflection is school climate and discipline data. I believe this data is of particular importance as it can provide insight into potential impacts of shifting from teams of teachers and students. With that in mind, I compared data from the 2011-2012 and 2012 -2013 school climate survey, as well as discipline data for the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years. Specifically, I am interested to see if the switch from teaming impacted the perceptions of staff, students, and families, as well as the actual discipline data.

School Climate Survey

The Delaware School Climate Survey is a tool designed to provide schools with a measure of school climate. The survey, and scoring, are available free of charge to all Delaware schools and are administered annually through a partnership between DOE and the Delaware Positive Behavior Support Project at the University of Delaware's Center for Disabilities Studies. The survey is available in a Student (Grades 3 -12), Teacher/Staff, and Home version, to gather the perspectives of different stakeholder groups. Technical information about the Delaware School Climate Survey can be found by visiting the following link:

<http://wordpress.oet.udel.edu/pbs/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/Final-Technical-Manual.pdf>.

As indicated above, I will be reviewing school climate survey data to determine the value of teacher and student teams as it relates to school climate. Each survey item utilizes a Likert-Scale with the following response options: Disagree A lot, Disagree, Agree, and Agree a Lot. Response options are assigned a numeric value,

as follows: Disagree A lot = 1, Disagree = 2, Agree = 3, Agree A lot = 4. These numeric values are then used to create average items scores for response categories. Table 34 compares average item scores from the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 administrations of the school climate survey.

Table 34 Comparison of Average Item Scores for the Staff, Student, and Home Survey						
	Staff		Student		Parent	
	11/12	12/13	11/12	12/13	11/12	12/13
Teacher to Student Relations	101.28	96.69	100.44	99.49	99.78	96.95
Student to Student Relations	101.76	97.58	103.38	101.00	101.29	96.70
Respect for Diversity	101.15	98.45	101.43	99.99	99.63	97.22
Student Engagement School-Wide	102.38	96.98	102.81	100.95	98.63	Not Included
Clarity of Expectations	105.27	100.24	100.95	98.82	98.33	98.14
Fairness of Rules	102.19	100.29	102.53	99.82	99.80	100.27
School Safety	99.60	94.73	100.51	97.58	97.42	97.14
Bullying School-Wide	100.35	102.84	100.56	102.18	101.54	Not Included
Total School Climate	106.44	98.98	102.22	99.24	99.43	97.02

Note: For Bullying School-Wide a higher response score represents a negative result

A quick review of Table 34 reveals the following:

- The mean score for “Total School Climate” dropped for all stakeholder groups.

- The mean staff score for “Total School Climate” dropped 7.46 points, the student score dropped 2.98, and the parent survey dropped 2.41.
- Decreases were visible in Teacher to Student Relations, Student to Student Relations, School Safety, and Bullying School-Wide (bolded above).
- In most cases, the largest difference in mean scores was observed in the teacher survey.

In all, the consistency across the three versions of the survey points to a perceived change in the school climate at Gauger-Cobbs. Particularly concerning are the perceptions of teachers, as the vast majority have been at Gauger multiple years and should have a good sense of changes in school climate.

School-Wide Discipline Trends

In addition to the climate survey data, which captures the perceptions of key stakeholders, it is important that we examine our actual discipline data to look for trends. Table 35 summarizes differences in discipline data for selected offense categories over the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school-years.

Table 35 Comparison of Discipline Data: 2011-2012 v. 2012-2013		
Category	2011-2012	2012-2013
Total Incidents	2,425	2,737
Offensive Touching – Student Victim	59	78
Fighting	59	75
Late to Class	121	202
Unauthorized Area	166	207
Disrespect to a Teacher	149	228
Disrespect to a Student	179	77
Skipping	58	149

The data in Table 35 supports an increase in disciplinary incidents for the 2012 – 2013 school-year. Specifically, the following stood out during my review:

- Compared to 2011-2012, there was an increase in total incidents in the 2012-2013 school-year.
- There was an increase in the following incident types: “Late to Class”, “Skipping”, and “Unauthorized Area”. I believe increases in these types of incidents are the result of the shift away from away from teacher and student teams. In past years, the teams of teachers were better able to build relationships with their students and provide support when needed. While this support extended beyond simply getting students into class, I believe the lack of teaming prevented teachers from developing relationships with students and therefore, intervening to ensure students are making good choices.
- There were increased incidents of “Offensive Touching” and “Fighting” during the 2012-2013 school-year. Coupled with the

decreased average item score for “Student to Student Interactions”, this data suggests that the shift from student teams has impacted student interactions. Additionally, teachers were less able to identify potential conflicts and support students in resolving the matter appropriately.

- There was an increase in incidents of “Disrespect to Staff” compared to the 2011- 2012 school-year. I believe this is the result of staff and students failing to develop the type of relationships that had been developed through teaming of teachers and students. Through teams, teachers were able to spend more time with students, establish consistent expectations, and reward students through team PBS events. Without teams, this was difficult and manifested itself in increased negative interactions.

Master Schedule Survey

In addition to academic, school-climate, and discipline data, I was interested in gathering teacher feedback on specific aspects of the master schedule. To collect this feedback, a survey of staff was conducted using Qualtrics. The survey sought to capture feedback related to the effectiveness of the current schedule and potential changes for the next year. Table 36 contains a summary of key topics, response data, and brief reflection in each area.

Table 36		Summary of Master Schedule Survey Response Data		
Topic:	Question #:	Question:	Data:	Reflection:
Length of the Block	5	As it relates to the length of the block, the number of minutes was_____.	Sufficient 61% Minimally Sufficient 27% Insufficient 12%	While the majority felt that the time was sufficient or minimally sufficient this seems to contradict achievement data.
Length of the Block & PLC's.	10	The current length of the block _____the PLC Process.	Supports 32% Somewhat Supports 16% Somewhat Impedes 33% Impedes 11% Other 8%	Enough responded on the impedes end of the spectrum to cause concern. Also text responses identified large group PLC's as a barrier to the PLC process.
Length of the Block	11	If possible the length of the block should _____for the 2013-2014 school-year.	Remain the same 53% Increase 41% Decrease 6%	While academic data could suggest the shortened block length negatively impacted achievement there are other variables such as the lack of teams that must be considered.
Rotating Schedule	12	I benefited from having my planning block at different times each day.	Strongly Agree 43% Agree 34% Neither Agree/Disagree 18% Disagree 5% Strongly Disagree 0%	The data for these and other questions represent strong support for Rotation in the master schedule for next year. While the issue of scheduling parent conferences must be addressed, this was largely a result of our shift away from teaming.
Rotating Schedule	12	I benefitted from meeting with my students at different times	Strongly Agree 62% Agree 25% Neither Agree/Disagree %11 Disagree 1%	

		each day.	Strongly Disagree 1%	
Rotating Schedule	12	My students benefitted from meeting with me at different times each day.	Strongly Agree 54% Agree 28% Neither Agree/Disagree 12% Disagree 5% Strongly Disagree 1%	
Rotating Schedule	13	The most challenging aspect of the Rotating Schedule was_____.	Scheduling Conferences 70% Confused students/parents 14% Lack of routine (students) 16% Lack of routine (staff) 14% Other 25%	
Rotating Schedule	14	Indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statement: Rotation should be built into the 2013-2014 master schedule.	Strongly Agree 40% Agree 42% Neither Agree/Disagree 12% Disagree 4% Strongly Disagree 0%	
Teaming	15	The lack of teams made it challenging to meet the needs of struggling students.	Strongly Agree 33% Agree 33% Neither Agree/Disagree 20% Disagree 12% Strongly Disagree 2%	The feedback related to teaming was clearly in favor of a return to teams. I was not surprised and also believed that the shift had impacted their ability to work with struggling students
Teaming	15	The lack of teams made it difficult to	Strongly Agree 40% Agree 29% Neither	

		consistently enforce behavior expectations.	Agree/Disagree 23% Disagree 4% Strongly Disagree 4%	and monitor behavior.
Teaming	18	I would like to see “Teaming” as a part of the 2013-2014 Master Schedule.	Agree 83% Disagree 5% Neutral 12%	
Science & Social Studies	19	The amount of time allocated for Science and Social Studies was ____.	Too Little 24% Just Right 6% Too Much 0% Not a Science/Social Studies Teacher 70%	The length of the block was more challenging to Science/Social Studies because they met every other day instead of everyday like Math and ELA.
Science & Social Studies	20	Science and Social Studies should be ____.	Year Long Courses 5% Semester Courses 23% Other 8% Not Science or Social Studies Teacher 65%	Also it seems clear that semesters is the preferred model for science and social studies.
Literacy Block	22	The amount of time allotted for the literacy block was ____.	Too Little 0% Just Right 16% Too Much 46% Not a Literacy Enrichment or Intervention Teacher 37%	Questions 22 and 26 indicate that the majority of staff felt that 66 minutes for Literacy Enrichment or Intervention was too much.
Literacy Block	24	When possible students should be assigned to ____ for literacy intervention.	Their regular ELA Teacher 38% Another ELA Teacher 6% Does not Matter 12% Not a Literacy Enrichment or Intervention Teacher 43%	Additionally, class size was identified as one of the leading barriers to implementation. I was surprised that resources was not identified as a major barrier to implementation.
Literacy Block	25	The greatest barrier to	Class Size 24% Motivating Students	

		implementation of Literacy Intervention or enrichment was _____.	42% My understanding PALS or RT 3% Lack of Planning Time 18% Locating Resources 14% Other 17% Not a Literacy Enrichment or Intervention Teacher 38%
Literacy Block	26	The length of the literacy block in 2013- 2014 should be_____.	20 to 30 minutes 27% 30 to 40 minutes 25% 40 to 50 minutes 6% Same as other blocks 13% No opinion 28%

In addition to multiple choice options, the survey included text entry opportunities for staff to provide additional feedback. To assist with the review of text entry responses, individual text entries were assigned first to a “topic area” then to a “sub-topic”.

Responses were then tallied by sub-topic to identify trends in text entry responses.

Table 37 presents an overview of text entry responses by topic area and sub-topic area for review and reflection.

Table 37 Text Entry Responses by Topic Area and Sub-Topic		
Topic Area:	Sub-Topic:	Frequency
Length of the Block	Less time for personal planning was a challenge.	4
	Less time available for application of newly introduced concepts.	2
		1
	Less time to provide individual support to students.	4
	The shortened block was more appropriate for middle school students.	2
		5
Rotating Schedule	The new curriculum in ELA made it challenging to adjust to the shortened block.	
	Difficult initially to establish a routine.	2
	Difficulty scheduling parent conferences.	2
	Difficult on days when planning was first or last.	2
	Teaming	
Teaming	It was a challenge to develop relationships with students and families.	5
		3
	It was difficult to manage student behavior.	2
	It was difficult to schedule parent teacher conferences.	2
	It was difficult to organize school-wide events.	4
	I was unaware of major assignments and pacing in other content areas.	2
		3
	I felt disconnected from other staff.	
	It was difficult to collaborate in support of struggling students.	
Science and Social Studies	The every other day format impacted retention of new skills or concepts and homework completion.	5
The Literacy Block	Students were incorrectly placed into interventions.	3
	Intervention groups should rotate periodically.	1
	More strategies are needed beyond PALS and RT.	1
	A scope and sequence for the entire school year should be developed.	4
		1
The literacy block should rotate within the schedule.		

Staffing Considerations and Implications:

In addition to my review data and staff feedback, it is important that I consider the impact of staffing allocations. The reality is that the administrative team may have to prioritize the recommendations presented above based on staffing limitations and student projections. Table 38 provides a summary of the teaching units allocated to Gauger-Cobbs for the 2013-2014 school-year.

Table 38 Unit Allocation and Student Projections for 2013-2014 School-Year		
Area/Grade:	Projected # of Students	Unit Allocation
Regular Education	984	49
6-8		
6	309	
7	353	
8	322	
Vocational	N/A	6
Special	154	17
Education=Inclusion		* Two units are assigned as EDs*
6	57	
7	46	
8	51	
Specialized Support	30	5
6	8	
7	10	
8	12	
Specialist	N/A	2
SRO	N/A	1
Totals	1138	72

In addition to the staff allocations and student projections above, the district also communicated the following “non-negotiable” requests that impact staffing:

1. All middle schools must have a team structure for 6th grade students.
2. Middle schools must offer a high school Credit Spanish course for “at risk” students, in addition to the tradition high school credit course.

To better understand how staffing allocations and the “non-negotiable” requests impact the decision making of the administrative team, I have identified considerations for each the focus areas. These considerations are presented in Table 39 and will help the administrative team to prioritize recommendations.

Table 39	Staffing Considerations
Length of the Block	<p>As it relates to the length of the block there is one major consideration for the administrative team to take into account. Returning to a 4 block day with a “skinny” limits the number of sections that can be taught by an individual teacher. This has implications for class size as it will decrease the number of sections that can be offered, which were able to overcome this last year by including “single dose” classes in our master schedule. If we look at the sixth grade projection for next year we can expect anywhere from 375 to 400 students. If we use a 4 block day (with a skinny) we can offer 12 sections of Math, ELA, Social Studies, and Science, which is roughly 32 to 33 students per class. If we were to stick to our 5 block day and forgo the intervention block we can offer 16 sections of core classes for a class size of 24 or 25. There are benefits to both, with the first model providing designated time for intervention and the second providing reduced class size, but creating the need for an alternative way to provide intervention.</p>
Teaming	<p>As indicated above, the district has mandated that 6th grade teachers and students are organized into teams. While I have recommended that teaming return to 7th and 8th grade as well, there are several considerations. First, returning to teams limits flexibility as to how staff are utilized. For example last year several staff members had “single-dose” courses for Math and ELA, which pulled students from all over the building. With the return to teams these opportunities will not be offered as it would require students to be “off team” for core classes. Second, we must build “team planning time” into the master schedule, in addition to “PLC” time, further limiting flexibility within the master schedule. Third, we will need all of our math staff to be teaching core content, reducing the opportunity to provide scheduled intervention as we did last year.</p>
Social Studies and Science	<p>There are no staffing considerations associated with shifting from year-long to semester courses. Class size will remain the same; however it will allow Science and Social Studies to focus their efforts on half of their caseload at a time.</p>
Rotating Schedule	<p>Continuation of the rotating schedule has one major implication for use of staff. While it does not limit the number of sections or the ability to offer intervention it prevents the administrative team from developing a consistent duty roster for key parts of the day, such as lunch and dismissal. Last year we were able to get by with the support of paraprofessional units that were earned following September 30th count. Having lost those units since, rotating may present more challenges.</p>

Recommendations for the 2013-2014 Master Schedule:

As discussed earlier, the purpose of this reflection was to develop scheduling recommendations for the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team in order to support planning for the 2013-2014 school-year. In particular, I was hopeful to determine the impact of recent changes related to the following areas:

1. Shortening instructional time for Math, ELA, Social Studies, and Science.
2. Shifting away from teacher and student teams.
3. Offering Science and Social Studies as year-long courses.
4. Implementation of a Rotation Cycle.

To support this process, I reviewed academic data, climate survey data, discipline data, staff feedback, and staffing considerations prior to developing recommendations. Following my review, I developed the following recommendations for consideration by the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team. These recommendations, as well as a brief rationale, are presented in Table 40.

Table 40 Scheduling Recommendations

Focus Area:	Recommendation:	Rationale
Overall Structure of the Schedule	1. Rotating 4-Block A/B Schedule with a 35 minute “skinny” for intervention	1. This format would allow for increased instructional time in core subject areas and still provide time scheduled time for intervention.
Length of the Block	Extend the length of the block for Math, ELA, Science, Social Studies, and ELA/Expressive Arts Shorten the length of the intervention	DCAS data, particularly for math, suggest that lost instructional time negatively impacted achievement. 41% of staff surveyed indicated the length of the block should increase. 46% of staff surveyed indicated the amount of time allotted for literacy intervention was “too much”. 44% of staff surveyed indicated that the

	block.	length of the block “impedes” or “somewhat impedes” the PLC process. Text entry data indicates that the shortened block impacted planning and delivery of instruction.
Teaming	Resume teaming of students and teachers for all grade levels.	Mean scores related to school-climate survey decreased for all three stakeholder groups surveyed. Total discipline incidents and number of incidents in key offenses increased from 2011-2012 to 2012=2013. 83% of staff surveyed indicated that they would “like” to see teaming as part of the 2013-2014 master schedule. 66% of staff surveyed felt that the lack of teams made it challenging to meet the needs of struggling students. 5. Text entry data supported a return to teaming and reiterated the difficulties experienced by teachers in 2012-2013.
Science and Social Studies	Schedule Science and Social Studies courses as semester classes.	DCAS indicates that the mean instructional score for both science and social studies dropped this past year using the “year-long” format. 23% of teachers surveyed indicated that Science and Social Studies should be “Semester Courses”, 5% for “Year-long Courses”. 65% indicated that they do not teach Science or Social Studies. Text entry data indicates that the every other day format negatively impacted homework completion and retention of new concepts.
Rotating Schedule	1. Continue use of the rotating cycle.	1. 82% of teachers surveyed “Strongly Agreed” or “Agreed” that rotation should be included in the 2013 -2014 master schedule. 2. Text-entry data did identify some drawbacks, but I believe that a return to teaming will alleviate parent conference concerns and “routine concerns”.

Overview and reflections on the finalized 2013-2014 Master Schedule:

In the previous sections, I presented recommendations for consideration by the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team regarding development of the Master Schedule. Generally speaking, I recommended that the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team consider developing 4-Block, A/B Schedule, including a 35 minute “skinny” for intervention and continuation. I also recommended that the schedule incorporate teaming, rotation, and that Science and Social Studies be offered as semester courses. After much consideration, the administrative team settled on a 4 block A/B schedule with 84 minute blocks. The team decided to restore teaming and the delivery of Science and Social Studies as semester courses, while removing the school-wide literacy block, and the rotation of blocks. Additionally, some new structures emerged from our team discussions that were not addressed in any manner through my recommendations. The following is a review of the key structures incorporated in the finalized 2013-2014 master schedule and the rationale behind decision making:

Teaming

As indicated above, the administrative team agreed to restore teaming of teachers and students at Gauger-Cobbs for all grade levels. For each grade level, students were assigned to one of two teams, with each team containing 2 Math, 2 ELA, 1 Science, and 1 Social Studies teacher. In past years, students were divided into 4 “clusters” per grade level, with cohorts of students traveling together all day. The decision to create two teams per grade level allows students to be attached to a team of teachers without necessarily travelling as a group all day, every day, which had proven to lead to tension between students in past years.

Science and Social Studies

As was the case with teaming, the recommendation to deliver Science and Social Studies through a semester format was accepted by the team. As one can deduce from the description above, the Science and Social Studies department is comprised of half the number of teachers that comprise the Math and ELA departments, respectively. As a result Science and Social Studies teachers have a caseload that is two times that of Math and ELA teachers, making delivery through semesters an important structure because it allows them to work with half of their caseload at time; making their caseload more manageable.

Rotation of Blocks

As evidenced by the feedback gathered through the staff survey, rotating was one of the more popular structures of the 2012-2013 master schedule. However, as the administrative team discussed the recommendation to continue rotating, it was difficult to find evidence that the process was beneficial for our students. In 2012-2013, the first year of rotation, DCAS scores dropped, discipline incidents increased, and school climate declined, as measured by the school climate survey. Although there were other factors, such as the shift from teaming and a statewide dip in student achievement, the administrative team decided that increasing routine and structure in the building was top priority.

Length of the Block

The decision to remove the school-wide literacy block was perhaps the most challenging for me as an administrator. In preparation for the 2012-2013 school-year, Gauger had restructured the master schedule to include a 63 minute school-wide

literacy block and committed significant professional development hours to support the use of Peer Assisted Learning Strategies and Reciprocal Teaching. Although improving literacy is still a focus at Gauger-Cobbs, there were two factors that led to this decision. First, the administrative team was concerned with the decline in Math performance across all three grade levels in 2012-2013. The team attributed this, at least in part, to the decreased instructional time required to allow for the literacy block. The removal of the literacy block restored 84 minute blocks for Math and all other content areas. Second, the team believed that the roll-out of common core would result in increased literacy instruction in content areas other than ELA.

Math/Literacy Intervention

The decision to remove the school-wide literacy block meant that Gauger would have to develop another structure to support struggling students. To replace the support provided through the school-wide intervention, two staff members were designated intervention teachers, with one responsible for providing Math intervention and one providing ELA intervention. Students, regular education or special education, are scheduled into intervention during elective time. This ensures that students have access to intervention without missing core instruction, reduces lost time due to the transitions associated with a pull-out model, and ensures consistency, with all interventions in both Math and ELA being provided by the one individual in each content area.

Common Planning Time

A final aspect of the 2013-2014 master schedule is common planning time for both PLCs and grade level teams. From a PLC perspective, this is an important time to collaborate around lesson planning, developing and comparing data from common assessments, and participating in content specific professional development. From a team perspective, this time vital for planning supports for struggling students and developing cross curricular lessons. While common planning time for PLCs is mandated, team plan time is a luxury that can easily be provided through the 4 block A/B structure. That being said, providing common plan time for teams was a priority and another factor in the shift from last year's 5 block day to this year's 4 block day.

Conclusion:

As I finalize my reflection around the development of the 2013-2014 master schedule, it is interesting to compare recommendations to the final product. Although much of my work is focused on establishing a comprehensive literacy program at Gauger-Cobbs, priorities related to school climate and other content areas such as Math, Science, and Social Studies influenced much of the decision making. However, as we begin the school-year I believe that I have a more balanced master schedule than the 2012-2013 version. This balance will help to foster a more positive school climate, provide the planning time necessary to support literacy instruction in all content areas, as well as planning to support struggling students; and provide scheduled time for ELA and Math intervention.

REFERENCES

- Biancarosa, C., & Snow, C. E. (2006). *Reading next—A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy: A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York* (2nd ed.). Washington, DC:Alliance for Excellent Education.

Appendix H

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

Introduction:

In recent years, the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team has worked to establish a school-wide literacy program. Previous efforts have sought to provide struggling students with interventions through Response to Intervention (RTI) or through the ELA curriculum. To date, one element that has been largely absent is literacy instruction through the use of content specific strategies. The implementation of Common Core State Standards provides both an opportunity and an obligation for the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team to expand content area literacy efforts. In the article *Literacy Instruction in the Content Areas: Getting to the Core of Middle and High-School Improvement*, authors Heller and Greenleaf (2007) highlight that students “must receive content area literacy instruction” even if they have fluency and comprehension needs that are being addressed through other pathways. The authors also highlight the need for secondary schools to do the following:

- Clarify that it is not the role of content area teachers to provide “basic reading instruction”, but rather support related to content specific literacy skills.
- Define the literacy skills that are critical to each content area and that should be taught in those settings.
- Provide professional development to teachers in skills that are critical to their own content area.

- Provide incentives and tools to encourage literacy instruction within the content areas.

With that in mind, the purpose of this artifact is to outline professional development activities that will support the use of content specific literacy instruction and strategies in all Gauger classrooms, through implementation of the Common Core State Standards. Activities were identified with the support of the “Common Core Implementation Team”, which includes a teacher leader from the Math and ELA department, as well as Gauger’s instructional coach. The team began meeting regularly in the spring of 2013 and participated in a “Common Core Boot Camp” in early August, providing two full days dedicated to planning professional development activities. To help frame the need and task at hand, background information related to school demographics, recent literacy efforts, and student achievement is provided prior to a description of professional development activities.

School Description

Gauger-Cobbs Middle School, located in Newark, De, is home to a diverse student body totaling 1214 students. This total includes 407 6th grade students, 428 7th grade students, and 379 8th grade students. The racial/ethnic breakdown of these students is as follows: American Indian (.3%), African-American (40.3%), Asian American (3.2%), Hawaiian (.3%), Hispanic (17.9%), White (37.3%) and Multi-Racial (.9%). Additionally, of the 1214 students enrolled in fall 2013:

- 11.3% were receiving Special Education services
- 3.3% were identified as ELL
- 62.4% were identified as Low-Income

Description of Staff

Gauger-Cobbs has a total of 69 teacher units with a racial/ethnic composition of 21.3% African American and 77.7% White. Teacher experience, by number and percent, is summarized in the Table 41 below.

Table 41 Teacher Experience		
Experience Range	Number of Teachers	% of Teachers
4 years or Less	13	18.8
5-9 Years	12	17.4
10-14 Years	17	24.6
15-19 Years	13	18.7
20-24 Years	7	10.1
25-29 Years	4	5.8
30 Years or More	3	4.3
Total	69	100

In addition to years of service Table 42 summarizes the level of educational attainment for Gauger instructional staff by number and percent.

Table 42 Teacher Level of Educational Attainment		
Education Level	Number of Teachers	% of Teachers
Below Bachelor	1	1.7
Bachelor	13	18.8
Bach Plus 15	9	13
Bach Plus 30	6	8.7
Master	18	26.1
Master Plus 15	11	15.9
Master Plus 30	7	10.1
Master Plus 45	3	4.3
Doctorate	1	1.4
Total	69	100

According to Table 1, 36.2 % of teachers at Gauger-Cobbs have less than 10 years of teaching experience, while 20.2 % have more than 20 years of experience. The majority of teachers at Gauger-Cobbs fall in between with 43.4% of teachers having between 10-20 years of teaching experience. Table. 2 indicates that 79.5% of Gauger

staff have at least a Bachelors plus 15 as their educational level. The data contained in Table 1 and 2 indicate that the staff at Gauger-Cobbs is experienced and well educated. However, the data in Table 1 also suggest a staff that is far removed from their teacher preparation courses and is a staff that is likely in need of professional development related to content specific literacy strategies.

Instructional Focus

In recent years administrators and teacher leaders at Gauger-Cobbs have worked diligently to focus the efforts staff. The work of the Vision 2015 Team, comprised of both administrators and teachers has led to the development of the following School-Wide Instructional Focus:

“Through a school-wide effort, all Gauger-Cobbs Middle School students will use evidence based strategies to learn, apply, and convey their understanding of content. Student growth will be measured by improved scores on: DCAS and curriculum based assessments....Knowledge, Learn it, Use it, Share it”. This instructional focus sets the tone for staff, emphasizing the use of evidence based strategies and both state and curriculum based assessments to measure growth. The instructional focus is present in each classroom and utilized to communicate the essential question (Learn it), the class activity or homework (Use it), and the collaborative/discussion activity (Share it) each day. Additionally, the instructional focus is posted throughout the building, included in the student agenda, included in letters/newsletters sent home, reviewed at school events, reviewed on morning announcements, and printed on school lanyards and post-it notes. The Vision Team has also worked to develop a culture of student efficacy at Gauger-Cobbs. These efforts include professional development activities for staff, direct instruction related

to the growth mindset and the underlying brain science, student goal setting activities/classroom activities, and school-wide “mindset messages”. Finally, the Vision Team has expanded its focus to include instructional feedback, beginning in October of 2013-2014. While this work has just begun, the focus will be on providing teachers with feedback that will allow them to reflect upon and improve their practice.

Context of Literacy Instruction at Gauger-Cobbs

As briefly described in the introduction, literacy has been an area of heightened focus at Gauger beginning with the 2011-2012 school-year, during which the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team began working to establish a comprehensive school-wide literacy program. The team began by providing professional development for the implementation of Peer Assisted Learning Strategies. Also known as PALS, Peer Assisted Learning Strategies is a set of collaborative reading activities, which follows as strict format for student pairings and use of time. With the goal of improving school-wide literacy efforts, PALS was delivered every other day through ELA classrooms. In addition to utilizing PALS to strengthen tier one; the team also launched a Response to Intervention (RTI) pilot to serve 6th grade students. The program utilized a “pull-out” structure to provide intervention to students in need of tier 2 and tier 3 interventions. Tier 2 interventions included the use of Read Naturally Encore, PALS, and Achieve 3000. Tier 3 interventions included Read 180 and Teacher Created Materials.

In 2012 – 2013 the administrative team expanded literacy efforts, restructuring the master schedule to incorporate a school-wide literacy block. To accommodate the reading block, the administrative team shifted from a 4 block day, with 84 minute blocks, to a 5 block day comprised of 66 minute blocks. This shift allowed RTI efforts

to be expanded to 7th and 8th grade and allowed RTI to be delivered through a scheduled class, the literacy block, instead of the pull-out model utilized in the pilot. Students that scored a 1 or 2 on spring (2012) DCAS Reading were scheduled into “Literacy Intervention” and participated in PALS. Students scoring a 3 or 4 were scheduled into “Literacy Enrichment” and participated in “Reciprocal Teaching”. Students in need of tier 3 intervention were scheduled into Read 180 or Achieve 3000 in place of an elective opportunity, in addition to PALS participation.

Entering the current school-year (2013-2014), the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team once again revisited literacy efforts. The school-wide literacy block was removed from the master schedule to allow for a return to the 4 block (84 minutes/block) structure utilized in the 2011-2012 school-year. This decision to remove the literacy block had less to do with literacy and was more a response to declined math performance in 2012-2013, which the administrative team attributed to loss of instructional time the previous year. That said, for the majority of 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students at Gauger-Cobbs, literacy instruction and literacy related interventions are delivered through the English Language Arts curriculum. These classes meet each day for 84 minutes and have an average class size of 33 students. These courses are scheduled as a “double-dose”, meaning that students attend ELA every day for 84 minutes. The intent of the “double-dose” is to provide teachers with the time necessary for intervention or enrichment during the students’ regularly scheduled class time. As a foundation, all teachers are provided with the following materials to support their curriculum:

- Holt McDougal Literature Series, which includes the following:
 - Literature Anthology (student and teacher editions)
 - The Interactive Reader
 - Media Smart DVD
 - Teacher One Stop DVD
 - Grammar Notes DVD
 - Connections: Nonfiction for Common Core DVD
 - Audio Tour DVD
 - Write Smart DVD
 - Online component for students and teachers to access the textbook and additional resources
 - Sadlier - Common Core Vocabulary Workshop Levels A, B, and C

In addition, the following resources are available to teachers through the school library or the ELA department:

- SRA - Specific Skills Series
- Cambium Learning Group – Rewards Multisyllabic Word Reading Strategies
- McDougal Littell – The Writer’s Craft grades 7 & 8 (student editions and teacher’s resource kit)
- Pearson Learning group – Language Arts Reading Strategies
- McDougal Littell - Writing Research Reports
- Heath – Communication Handbook, Teacher’s Planning Guide, and Student Practice Book grades 7& 8
- Heath Middle Level Literature series, grades 7 & 8:

- Reader's Guides
- Transparencies
- Lesson Plans for Block Scheduling
- Literature and Grammar Workshop
- Mini Lessons Assessment Resources
- Trade books in a variety of genres
- Classroom Libraries
- Biweekly Scholastic Scope subscription

In addition to the ELA curriculum and teacher developed interventions provided in the double-dose, Gauger-Cobbs offers 6 sections of single-dose Read 180, which is designed as a tier 3 intervention. These sections meet every other day for 84 minutes and serves our “specialized support” team; a population of special education students who have intense academic and behavioral needs. Average class size for these sections is 8.2 students per class. There are also 6 additional sections of Literacy Seminar to support the needs of regular education and special education students that receive services in the inclusion classroom. Designed as a tier 3 intervention, Literacy Seminar students participate in either Read 180 or Achieve 3000, depending on their literacy needs. These classes are built as year-long courses and meet every other day for 84 minutes; however, students can exit if they demonstrate growth on DCAS or on other indicators (i.e. SRI). The average class size is 12 and students are identified through teacher recommendation, and DCAS test scores.

At the building level, support is provided to teachers through professional learning communities (PLC's), instructional coaching, and support from administrators. Professional learning communities are comprised of content specific,

grade level groupings, that meet 2-3 times weekly. Meetings are 45 minutes in length and provide teachers the opportunity to plan activities, design common assessments, participate in professional development, review assessment data, and conduct peer visits. Each PLC maintains a “collaborative binder” which contains notes from each meeting, sample activities/assessments, and data from common assessments. These binders are collected and reviewed by administrators quarterly, and feedback is provided utilizing a rubric. In addition to PLC’s, teachers at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School receive support in the form of instructional coaching. In most cases support from the instructional coach is provided through PLC’s. To further support teachers Gauger-Cobbs has 3 building level administrators, 1 principal and 2 assistant principals. Each teacher is assigned to an administrator for the purposes of DPAS II, a process that ensures teachers have opportunities to meet with an administrator to set goals, and to participate in formative and summative assessments. These interactions provide teachers and administrators the chance to have conversations about teaching and learning. Additionally, school administrators conduct walk-throughs and provide feedback to teachers based on these brief non-evaluative observations.

Assessment-Based Concern

Gauger-Cobbs current AYP Status is “Below Target” and Gauger missed sub group targets for Reading in both the Original and Growth Model for the 2012-2013 school-year. Table 43 presents an overview of AYP cell performance for the 2012-2013 DCAS administration.

Table 43 AYP Cell Performance DCAS Reading 2012-2013		
Sub-Group	Original Model	Growth Model
All Students	Below Target	Above Target
American Indian/Alaska Native	N/A	N/A
African American/Black	Meets Target	Above Target
Asian American	Meets Target	Above Target
Native Hawaiian or Pa/Islander	N/A	N/A
Hispanic/Latino	Meets Target	Above Target
White or Caucasian	Meets Target	Above Target
Multi-Racial	N/A	N/A
English Language Learners	Meets Target	Above Target
Students with Disabilities	Below Target	Below Target
Economically Disadvantaged	Meets Target	Above Target
Total Cells Missed	2	1

* Note – N/A indicates not enough students for an AYP Cell*

In both the Original and Growth model, targets were missed in the “Students with Disabilities” cell, indicating that this is a critical area of concern for Gauger.

Additionally, the performance of special education students was so poor that it caused Gauger to miss the “All Students” cell in the Original model, despite meeting in every other cell. Table 44 compares the mean instructional score (by grade level) to the district and state for the following years: 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013.

Table 44 Reading – Mean Instructional Score for 2011-2012 and 2012-2013				
2010 – 2011	Gauger	District	State	Difference – State v. Gauger
6 th	754	752	778	24(-)
7 th	781	767	790	9(-)
8 th	805	799	818	13(-)
2011 – 2012	Gauger	District	State	Difference – State v. Gauger
6 th	775	772	790	15(-)
7 th	789	785	807	18(-)
8 th	821	814	830	9(-)
2012 – 2013	Gauger	District	State	Difference – State v. Gauger
6 th	780	776	794	14(-)
7 th	793	789	808	15(-)
8 th	818	815	834	16(-)

As it relates to the mean instructional score, Gauger’s literacy efforts have resulted in an upward trend, with the exception of 8th grade, which decreased by 3 points this past year. Additionally, Gauger has outperformed the district in all grade levels in the DCAS era. Compared to the state, Gauger has made continuous progress in 6th grade, while results have been up and down for 7th and 8th grade.

Professional Development Plan

It is important to note that the Common Core is not the first attempt to improve student outcomes through curriculum change. In the book Common Core: English Language Arts in a PLC at Work, authors Fisher & Frey (2013) discuss the all too common “this-too-shall-pass” attitude of educators across the country. To combat this, they suggest a need to build a deep understanding of the standards and what will be required from students. Additionally, they emphasize the need for schools and district

to develop clarity around an effective model for implementation. The following is Gauger's plan to build foundational knowledge of the Common Core State Standards as part of a larger implementation process. With this in mind, Gauger will utilize building professional development days and professional learning communities as the primary avenues for delivery of professional development. Generally speaking, building professional development days will be utilized to provide teachers with strategies or activities that can be practiced immediately in their classroom to support increased rigor around the use of text and writing based activities. For the 2013 – 2014 school-year, the following dates were identified as state or building professional development days:

- August 21st
- October 4th (Building/State Day)
- October 14th
- March 21st

Large group PLC sessions are held once or twice per month and provide an opportunity for all core content teachers, from a grade level, to plan together. This time is also utilized to present professional development to staff in a small, collaborative setting. Activities for large group PLC sessions will be based on recommendations from Common Core: English Language Arts in a PLC at Work and will be designed to build knowledge of the Core Content Standards and the practices needed to complete the shift. Planned dates for larger group PLC sessions are as follows:

- October – 30th
- November – 14th

- December – 19th
- January – 8th & 23rd
- February – 12th & 26th
- March – 12th
- April – 16th
- May – 8th

Use of content specific literacy strategies in classrooms will increase the amount of time that students are engaged in literacy activities and will increase student engagement by increasing the value of reading or writing. As a result, it is critical that professional development activities be delivered to all core content areas teachers, with the two key objectives. First, planned activities will introduce teachers to the Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, and Language standards for their specific content area. This is a critical part of the process, as teachers cannot develop, identify, or utilize “content specific strategies”, as recommended by Heller and Greenleaf, without a strong understanding of the standards themselves. Second, planned activities will provide teachers with opportunities to discuss, develop, and implement new content specific strategies in their classroom, another process that Heller and Greenleaf place value on in their article *Literacy instruction in the content areas: Getting to the core of middle and high school improvement* (Heller and Greenleaf, 2007). The following is a bulleted overview of planned professional development activities for the 2013 – 2014 school-year, including the delivery date, session title, session rational, session type (Building or PLC), and session activities. In some cases topics delivered through large group PLC sessions, which are only 45 minutes in length, are covered over two sessions.

Activity # 1

Delivery Date(s): August 21st

Session Title: Common Core Overview and Self-Assessment

Session(s) Rationale: To introduce teachers to increased literacy expectations in all content areas and provide an opportunity for teachers self-assess their Common Core readiness.

Session(s) Type: Building Day

Activities:

Teachers completed a Common Core Self –Assessment to determine their comfort level with the skills and strategies associated with Common Core. After completing the self-assessment staff exchanged responses (anonymously) and participated in a “Human Graphing” activity, providing a visual of school-wide strengths and needs.

Activity # 2

Delivery Date(s): October 4th

Session Title: Achieve 3000 – Accessing and Using Informational Texts in the Classroom and Strategies for Independent Reading of Informational Text.

Session(s) Rational: To provide teachers of all content areas with access to leveled informational texts and strategies to assists students in making meaning from informational texts. In alignment with Heller and Greenleaf’s recommendation to provide “content specific strategies” the second session will include strategies specific

to Math, ELA, Social Studies, and Science; as well as guidelines for adapting strategies in expressive arts and vocational settings.

Session(s) Type: Building Day

Description of Activities:

The first session introduced teachers to Achieve 3000, an online resource which allows teachers access to informational texts in a variety of content areas. The program also allows teachers to produce these texts at varying grade levels to assist in meeting the individual needs of students. The second session, provided teachers with a series of strategies and supporting organizers to assist students in identifying text structures and determining meaning from informational texts. A variety of strategies will be presented to support all content area teachers.

Activity # 3

Delivery Date(s): October 14th

Session Title: Integrating Common Core Standards in Speaking and Listening and Integrating Common Core Standards in Writing

Session(s) Rational: To increase teacher understanding of the anchor standards associates with Speaking and Listening and to provide opportunities for teachers to self-reflect on their comfort level and willingness to integrate writing into their classrooms.

Session(s) Type: Building Day

Description of Activities:

The first session entitled “Integrating Common Core Standards in Speaking and Listening” will provide teachers with an opportunity to explore the Anchor Standards and domains associated with speaking and listening. Teachers will complete the “guiding questions for grade by grade analysis of the Language Standards” before discussing potential strategies to target speaking and listening skills. The grade analysis will focus teachers on the following: (1) What is our current level of knowledge about this standard? (2) How can we increase our expertise, (3) How will we measure our growth? The second session, “Integrating Common Core Standards in Writing” will begin with the following self-assessment questions: (1) How comfortable are you as a writer? (2) How comfortable are you as a writing scorer? (3) How often do you have students writing in your class? After completing the self-assessment, teachers will be provided with sample writing activities and scoring rubrics that can be utilized in class.

Activity # 4

Delivery Date(s): October 30th/ November 14th

Session Title: Understanding the Common Core – Five Important Shifts

Session(s) Rationale: To introduce teachers to the shifts necessary for implementation of the Common Core State Standards.

Session(s) Type: PLC (2 Sessions)

Description of Activities:

The first of the two sessions will engage teachers in reflection and discussion related to the following shifts: (1) Shift 1: Focus on Reading and Writing to Inform, Persuade, and Convey Experiences, (2) Shift 2: Focus on Increasing Text Complexity, (3) Shift 3: Focus on Speaking and Listening. Staff will reflect on the following questions prior to discussion facilitated by the instructional coach:

1. How often are informational texts utilized in your classroom?
2. To what extent are the texts you utilize complex?
3. Do students routinely discuss and develop texts that feature arguments with supporting evidence?

Building on the October 30th session, teachers will reflect around the following shifts:

- Shift 4: Focus on Text-Based Evidence for Argumentation
- Shift 5: Focus on Academic Vocabulary and Language

Reflection questions for this session include:

1. 1. To what extent do you focus on speaking and listening activities?
2. 2. In what ways do you develop academic vocabulary and language?

Teachers will be asked to bring sample texts and classroom activities to the session for the purposes of reflection and discussion.

Activity # 5

Delivery Date(s): December 19th/ January 8th

Session Title: Implementing the Common Core State Standards for Reading

Session(s) Rationale: To introduce teachers to the Common Core Standards for Reading.

Session(s) Type: PLC

Description of Activities:

In the first session, teachers will complete the “guiding questions for grade-by-grade analysis of reading standards” organizer to identify the following for each anchor standard: (a) What is familiar? (b) What is new? (c) What may be challenging to students? (d) What may be challenging to teachers? In the interest of time, teachers will be broken into smaller teams to complete the organizer and will report out their responses (time permitting). In the follow-up session, teachers will work in teams to analyze the text complexity of a sample text using the “Collaborative Team Protocol for Determining Text Complexity”. Teams will report out and discuss differences with the support of the session facilitator.

Activity # 6

Delivery Date(s): January 23rd / February 12th

Session(s) Title: Implementing the Common Core State Standards for Writing

Session(s) Rationale: To introduce teachers to the Common Core Writing standards and the major types of texts that can be utilized to teach standards.

Session(s) Type: PLC

Description of Activity:

To investigate the Anchor Standards associated with writing, teachers will complete the “guiding questions for grade by grade analysis of the writing standards” (see Appendix 1.C). Teachers will focus on the following: (1) What is the essence of the standard? (2) What teacher actions facilitate this standard in practice, and (3) What evidence will accept that are learning this standard? Following completion of the “grade by grade analysis”, teachers, with the support of the instructional coach, will discuss themes. During the second session, the instructional coach will model strategies to engage students, with the goal of improving writing fluency. Included amongst these are the following: Power Writing, Journal Writing, and Free Writing. Teachers will be provided planning time to determine how to incorporate one of these strategies into an upcoming lesson.

Activity # 7

Delivery Date: February 26th/ March 12th

Sessions(s) Title: Implementing the Common Core State Standards for Standards for Speaking, Listening, and Language

Sessions(s) Rationale: To provide teachers with support and strategies for vocabulary acquisition.

Session(s) Type: PLC

Description of Activities:

Teachers will be asked to bring a sample vocabulary activity or lesson for the purpose of comparison and discussion. Following discussion, the facilitator will introduce the

following strategies for use with students and provide sample activities that align to the Common Core State Standards:

- Looking Inside a Word - Structure
- Sample activities will focus of pre-fixes, suffixes, and base words to determine meaning.
- Looking Outside a Word – Context
- Samples activities will focus on the use of Definition, Synonyms, Antonyms, and Examples to determine meaning.
- Looking Outside a Word – Resources
- Sample activities will focus on using resources (i.e. glossary, electronic resources, or a peer) to determine meaning.

After the follow-up session, teachers will be asked to choose one strategy (from above) to try in their classroom prior to the March 12th session.

In this session, teachers will begin by discussing the successes and challenges associated with the vocabulary strategy that they implemented previously. Following this discussion, the facilitator will ask teacher to reflect on the process through which they identify key vocabulary. After some share-out, the facilitator will introduce the following “considerations” for teachers to use when selecting vocabulary for direct instruction:

- Conceptual Value – Does the word represent an important concept needed to understand the text?
- Repeatability – Will the word be encountered frequently during the year?
- Transportability – Will the word appear in many subjects or content areas?

- Contextual Analysis – Can the meaning be determined through context clues?
- Structural Analysis – Can the meaning be determined through analysis of prefixes, suffixes, and the base word.
- Cognitive Load – How many new words are appropriate for the student’s developmental level?

After brief discussion, teachers will analyze a short text passage to identify the vocabulary words which require direct instruction and those that can be identified through contextual or structural analysis.

Activity # 8

Delivery Date: April 16th

Sessions(s) Title: Implementing Formative Assessments to Guide Instruction and Intervention

Sessions(s) Rationale: To discuss the role of assessment and feedback in the Common Core Classroom.

Session(s) Type: PLC

Description of Activities:

In this session, teachers will discuss the role of assessment and feedback in the Common Core classroom. With support from the facilitator, teachers will discuss use of the following questions to guide development of formative and summative assessments:

- What does this assessment really measure?

- What expenditure of my time and effort will be required to administer?
- How will this assessment help my instruction?
- How can this assessment figure into my intervention efforts and reporting requirements?

Teachers will be provided with a sample assessment and will work collaboratively to reflect on the assessment using the questions identified above. This activity will be followed by presentation of exemplar formative and summative assessments by the instructional coach.

Activity # 9

Delivery Date: March 21st

Sessions(s) Title: New Practice Share-Out

Sessions(s) Rationale:

The purpose of this session will be for teachers to showcase new strategies and practices developed over the course of the 2013-2014 school-year. This would include sample texts, writing samples, formative/summative assessments, and activities to develop academic vocabulary.

Session(s) Type: PLC

Description of Activities:

First, teachers will collaborate by department to share sample assignments or assessments. Following this collaboration time, each department will then be asked to highlight one or two samples with the whole group and discuss successes or challenges encountered with use of the sample.

Activity # 10

Delivery Date: May 8th

Sessions(s) Title: Feedback

Sessions(s) Rationale:

To collect teacher feedback related to their ability to implement the Common Core State Standards

Session(s) Type: PLC

Description of Activities:

Teachers will complete a survey, developed by the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team, related to the level of understanding for each of the following standards: Reading, Writing, Speaking, Listening, and Language. In addition, survey items will measure teacher's self-assessment of their abilities to develop assessments, determine text complexity, identify key academic vocabulary, and develop formative and summative assessments. Teachers will also be provided an opportunity to give feedback through open ended response items.

Progress Monitoring

An important element of implementation efforts both this year and in future years will be monitoring the progress of our efforts. This can be accomplished through two existing structures at Gauger-Cobbs. One opportunity is the PLC structure, described earlier, which provides two pathways for monitoring. First, small group PLC's (grade level/content specific teams) maintain a collaborative binder which includes meeting notes and artifacts, such as classroom activities and formative and

summative assessments. This binder is collected quarterly for review by the administrative team and will provide an opportunity to see if PD efforts are resulting in discussion related to Common Core practices and use of new strategies. Second, the large group PLC is an opportunity to meet with all content areas (by grade level) to solicit feedback about professional development needs through informal or formal means, as described in activity # 10. In addition to the PLC structure, Gauger-Cobbs is currently participating in the instructional feedback pathway through as a member of the Vision 2015 network. The goal of this work is to provide more frequent feedback, from both peers and administrators, to teachers, about their practice. This will require increased classroom walkthroughs, providing both school administrators and Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) members with frequent opportunities to measure progress related to implementation of the Common Core. Together, data collected through feedback from PLC's and classroom walk-throughs, will provide useful information for the administrative team and the instructional coach. This information will be utilized in the planning of professional development activities for the 2014-2015 school-year.

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Summary:

Recent efforts to establish a comprehensive school-wide literacy program at Gauger-Cobbs have sought to improve literacy instruction through use of literacy strategies, such as PALs and RT, in the ELA classroom or through an intervention block. However, prior to the 2013-2014 school-year, Gauger had not capitalized on content area literacy instruction. The implementation of Common Core State Standards has presented the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team with an opportunity to expand literacy efforts into all classrooms. This process represents a major shift for

secondary educators and thus requires ongoing support for teachers. With that in mind, the preceding professional development plan is not a start to finish guide for implementation at Gauger, but rather a process to build foundational understanding of the Common Core State Standards and provide teachers with practices and strategies for use in the classroom. Full implementation will require future efforts regarding professional development and frequent feedback related to the use of new practices.

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- Fischer, D. & Frey, N. (2013) *Common Core English Language Arts in a PLC at Work Grades 6-8*. Bloomington, IN; Solution Tree Press
- Heller, R, & Greenleaf, C (2007). Literacy instruction in the content areas: Getting to the core of middle and high school improvement. Washington, DC; Alliance for Excellent Education.

Appendix I
RESEARCH REVIEW

Introduction:

In 1996, a group of bi-partisan governors and cooperate leaders formed a partnership to advocate for standards-based educational reform. This partnership resulted in the formation of Achieve, a non-profit organization, which along with the National Governors Association (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) facilitated the development of the Common Core State Standards. With the support of teachers, administrators, and experts in the field of education, the conglomerate produced the Common Core State Standards, which were finalized in 2010 and adopted by all but four states (Rust, 2010). The standards, which call for students to be engaged in more rigorous activities, offer the promise of improved student outcomes; however, they also present challenges.

Halladay and Moses (2013) state that supporting “students who have typically been identified as struggling under previous sets of state standards” is the “central issue” around the shift to Common Core State Standards. Included in this population are special education students, who despite individualized accommodations, often struggle academically. The report *Adolescent Literacy and Older Students with Learning Disabilities* (2008) reveals that 21% of learning disabled students are 5 or more grade levels behind in the area of reading. As a result, the drop-out rate for learning disabled students is 31.6% compared to 9.4% for their regular education peers. Gauger is not immune to the struggles experienced by special education students nationally. Data from the Delaware Comprehensive Assessment System (DCAS), for 2011-2012 and 2012 -2013 highlights the challenge facing the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team. Proficiency rates for special education students on the reading assessment were 18.49% for 2011-2012 and 20.95% in 2012 – 2013 respectively. These national and local figures make clear the challenge faced by the

increased rigor demanded by the implementation of Common Core State Standards. If decision makers do not respond, Common Core implementation will almost certainly increase the existing performance gap for special education students.

Audience and Purpose

In the report *Reading Next: A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy*, Biancarosa and Snow (2006) identify “Leadership” as a “Key Element” for the development of a “comprehensive and coordinated literacy program”. Specifically, the authors indicate that leaders are responsible for the “building of his or her-own personal knowledge” related to adolescent literacy and supports available for struggling students, which the authors highlight, will assist leadership in the selection of literacy interventions and programs.

As principal of Gauger-Cobbs, I will be the primary audience for this document, although findings could certainly be useful for other building administrators within the Christina School District. The purpose of this document will be to review evidenced base practices that could be implemented at the secondary level to support special education students in the area of literacy. The review will culminate in recommended actions to be considered by the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team, which will support an already existing area of need at Gauger-Cobbs and help to combat the potentially negative impact of Common Core Implementation for special education students.

The What Works Clearing House (WWC)

The What Works Clearing House (WWC) was utilized to identify evidenced-based programs or interventions for review. Developed in 2002, the WWC was created by the U.S. Department of Education to “provide information needed by

decision-makers” related to “educational products, practices, programs, and policies”. The WWC is a valuable resource, particularly in this instance, because they organize research into clearly defined topic areas, and report information regarding effectiveness in clearly defined domains

(<http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ies/ncee/wwc.html>).

For the purposes of my work, I explored the “Adolescent Literacy” topic area, which provides educators with a variety documents related to “literacy interventions for students in grades 4–12 (or ages 9–18)”. As indicated above, the WWC breaks topic areas into smaller domains. For the adolescent literacy topic area, the WWC defines the following domains: (1) Alphabetics, (2) Reading fluency, (3) Comprehension, and (4) General literacy achievement

(http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/reference_resources/adlit_protocol_v2.pdf). Ratings are communicated in each domain as “positive, potentially positive, mixed, no discernible effects, potentially negative, or negative.” Ratings are developed based on the following factors:

- The Quality of Research Design
- The Statistical Significance of the Findings
- The Size of the Difference between Participants in the Intervention and the Comparison Group
- The Consistency in Findings Across Studies

In addition to ratings of effectiveness, the WCC reports an “Improvement Index”, which is the difference in percentile rank score of the average student in the treatment group, compared to the percentile rank of the average student in the control group. Together, the effectiveness rating and the improvement index provide educators with

data to evaluate program effectiveness. Additional information related to WCC definitions and protocols can be found by visiting the following web address http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/reference_resources/adlit_protocol_v2.pdf.

Selection of Program/Interventions for Review

Programs for review were identified through use of the What Works Clearing House through the following process. First, I visited the following web address: http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/publications_reviews.aspxchoosing and selected “literacy” from the “Topics in Education” tab. Next, I selected “adolescent literacy”, from the “All Related Topic Areas” drop down menu, narrowing results from 354 to 37. Then, I searched “special education” in the “Type Keyword” field, which produced nine reports for review. Finally, the results were further narrowed by selecting “Intervention Reports” from the “All Publications and Review Types”. Intervention reports were chosen for review because they present readers with an overview of programs; including a brief description, costs, research, and effectiveness. This additional filter yielded the following programs: *Corrective Reading*, *Read Naturally*, *Language!*, *The Spalding Method*, *Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS)*, *Reciprocal Teaching (RT)*, *Reading Mastery*, and *Project CRISS*. It is important to note that *PALS* and *RT* are both programs familiar to the administrative team and staff at Gauger; however, they are not currently in use with special education students and thus were included in the review. For both *PALS* and *RT*, results from a recent program evaluation were included in the discussion. *The Spalding Method*, was eliminated from consideration due to the fact that the WWC was unable to identify a study that met evidence standards for review.

Evaluation Criteria for Review of Programs

In order to produce valuable recommendations, it is critical that potential programs are reviewed against criteria specific to the needs of special education students at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School. Given that the purpose is to identify programs to support special education students, it is important to clarify that the special education population at Gauger is approximately 225 students. While this is a large and significant sub-group, it does not require the same volume of resources as our school-wide population and this must be taken into account when reviewing programs. That said, the following criteria were identified for use in the review of potential programs (Note: Criteria are presented in no particular order): Program Delivery, Skills Addressed, Program Cost, and Program Effectiveness. Table 45 presents each criterion including a description and explanation as to how each impacts program selection.

Table 45 Overview of Evaluation Criteria		
Criterion	Description	Explanation
1. Program Delivery	Program Delivery examines the delivery model (i.e. small group), a description of the process (i.e. levels), and recommendations for the frequency and duration of delivery.	The delivery model can greatly enhance or reduce strain in other areas (i.e. technology needs) necessary for effective implementation. The frequency and duration recommendations must align or nearly align with our master schedule so that they can be implemented with fidelity
2. Skills Addressed	Examines the skills targeted by each program or intervention.	Gauger's special education population has a variety of skill deficits (i.e. decoding). Programs or interventions that address multiple skills will provide increased flexibility.
3. Program Cost	Includes approximate costs of program materials, software licenses, staffing needs, technology and other resources.	While the decision will not necessarily be based on the lowest pricing, programs that require large expenditures, may not be feasible.
4. Program Effectiveness	Description of What Works Clearing House findings.	Program effectiveness is critical; however recommended programs must meet the other criteria.

It is important to note that while the effectiveness of a program is critical, there is often limited research available upon which to judge the effectiveness of a program. Additionally, the WWC applies strict protocols in the identification of research studies, further limiting the volume of potential evidence and providing decision makers with the most reliable data available from which to make decisions.

Review of Programs

The primary source of information for program review was “Intervention Reports” developed by The What Works Clearinghouse and was supplemented by other sources when necessary. The following is a review of each program, including a “program description”, which explores criteria 1-3, “research overview” which investigates WCC research/program effectiveness (criteria #4), and “ implementation considerations” based on review of program.

Corrective Reading

Program Description

Produced by McGraw-Hill, Corrective Reading was developed to support struggling readers in grades 4-12. As it relates to program delivery and skills addressed, the program is divided into two components. The first component supports skill development related to decoding (fluency) and the second which addresses comprehension needs. The decoding component is divided into 4 sequential levels, while there are 6 levels to support improved comprehension. Prior to beginning, students complete a program specific placement test to determine their ability level and placement within the program. Lessons, which are both scripted and sequenced, are 45 minutes in length and are recommended for delivery 4 to 5 times per week. Although there is flexibility in group size, the developers recommend that groups not exceed 20 members. Finally, it is important to note that the decoding and comprehension components can be utilized separately to supplement core curriculum, or together as a separate intervention curriculum. As for the costs associated with the program, it is difficult to estimate, as the pricing of materials vary by level. Generally

speaking though, student materials range between \$10 and \$50 per level, while teacher materials are estimated at \$200 per level (What Works Clearinghouse, 2010)

Research Overview

To investigate the effectiveness of *Corrective Reading*, the WWC reviewed 129 studies including adolescent learners. From this review, one study was identified that met WWC standards. This study examined use of the decoding component of *Corrective Reading* to support improved abilities for 86 5th grade students. The 86 were part of a larger study design in which students from multiple schools were assigned to one of the following programs: Corrective Reading, Kaplan SpellRead, Failure Free Reading, or Wilson Reading, with unassigned students forming the control. Students identified for intervention were placed based on standardized test scores. Specifically, students scoring at or below the 30th percentile on a “word-level” reading assessment and above the 5th percentile on a vocabulary assessment were placed. Effectiveness ratings were developed from comparison of 55 5th grade students that participated in *Corrective Reading* and the control group comprised of 31 5th grade students. In terms of research findings, the WWC reported a rating of effectiveness and improvement index ratings for Alphabetics, Reading Fluency, and Comprehension. Table 46 presents WWC research findings for Corrective Reading level (What Works Clearinghouse, 2010)

Table 46 Corrective Reading		
Domain	Rating of Effectiveness	Improvement Index Rating Average Points
Alphabetics	No discernible effects	+4
Reading Fluency	No discernible effects	+4
Comprehension	No discernible effects	+3
General Literacy Achievement	N/A	N/A

Implementation Considerations

The review of the *Corrective Reading* description and related research produced the following factors for consideration:

1. Program Delivery

The program is designed to support students in grades 4-12, which means that the program could be utilized to support special education students across all grade level at Gauger-Cobbs. Also, lessons are scripted and sequenced for teachers, which should limit professional development needs and subsequent costs. This should allow for increased implementation fidelity and consistency across classrooms; two issues that proved to be challenging during literacy efforts. Finally, the recommended frequency and duration of delivery (45 min/4x per week) would be difficult to accomplish in our current master schedule.

2. Skills Addressed

The program addresses decoding (fluency) and comprehension needs, two of the 4 domains identified by the WWC for adolescent reading.

3. Program Costs

Program cost can be calculated using the Corrective Reading Order Form which can be accessed by visiting the following link:

https://www.mheonline.com/intervention_solutions/price_sheet/2012_corrective_reading_price_list.pdf. However, the Gauger administrative team would need to give some consideration to the number of materials to order at each level of the program.

4. Program Effectiveness

Program effectiveness, as reported by the WCC is somewhat, neutral with the program earning an effectiveness rating of “no discernible effects” and an achievement index of no greater than +4 for the three domains measured.

Read Naturally

Program Description

Read Naturally, created by Candyce Ihnot, is a program developed as a supplement to core literacy instruction. As a result, it can be utilized through whole class activities, as a pull-out intervention, or during after school activities. Generally speaking, the goal of the program is to support increased fluency (decoding), accuracy, and comprehension skills through the following strategies: Modeling, Repeated Reading, and Progress Modeling. During the first strategy, students listen and read along with a recorder story. The purpose of this activity is to provide a model for students related to pronunciation, rate, and expression. The second strategy, repeated reading, is designed to improve fluency. Students are given a “reading speed goal” and practice reading the passage until they feel able to meet that goal. Once ready, the

teacher will conduct a “pass timing”, to assess students in the following areas: (1) Goal Rate, (2) Errors (3) Phrasing, and (4) Comprehension. If the goal rate is met, the reading contains no more than 3 errors, phrasing is appropriate, and answers to comprehension questions are correct, than students move on; if not they resume practice until they are ready to try the “pass timing” again. During the final strategy, referred to as progress monitoring, students graph their scores (from all attempts), allowing students and teachers to track progress. In terms of delivery model, the program can be delivered to students through two pathways. First, the program can be administered through use of audio cd’s and “hardcopy” materials for both Read Naturally Encore and the Read Naturally Masters Edition. The second option provides schools with two computer-based options for delivery. Read Naturally- Software Edition is a school network version of the program, while Read-Live is a web based program providing students access to Read Naturally strategies. As it relates to program costs, pricing varies depending on the delivery method. For hardcopy materials prices vary depending on the desired materials, while audio cd’s are priced at \$129. Computer-based are priced as follows (What Works Clearinghouse, 2013):

Read Naturally – Software Edition (\$125 for 1 Computer or 399 per level for a School Network Version.)

Read-Live – Web-Based Program (Ranges from \$149 for 1 “seat” to \$1,999 for 130 “seats”)

Research Overview

To investigate program effectiveness, the WWC reviewed 56 studies that examined the impact of Read Naturally on adolescent readers. From that list, only one

was found to meet WWC evidence standards, which were met with “reservations”. Based on review of that study, an effectiveness rating and improvement index was assigned to Read Naturally. The study selected examined the impact of Read Naturally on 156 (78 Treatment/78 Control) 3rd – 5th grade students in 4 school within the Minneapolis Public School District. Two of the schools captured in the study utilized the program as “pull-out intervention”, while two utilized the program as an afterschool activity. In terms of WWC domains, the study only met evidence standards in “general literacy achievement” (What Works Clearinghouse, 2010). Findings for this domain are presented in Table 47.

Table 47 Read Naturally		
Domain	Rating of Effectiveness	Improvement Index Rating Average Points
Alphabetics	N/A	N/A
Reading Fluency	N/A	N/A
Comprehension	N/A	N/A
General Literacy Achievement	Potentially Positive Effects	+10

Implementation Considerations

The review of the *Reading Naturally* description and related research produced the following factors for consideration:

1. Program Delivery

The delivery model allows the program to be delivered in small-group or whole-group, and to be used as a pullout intervention during the school day or as part of afterschool activities. Also the structure of lesson delivery, which includes:

modeling, repeated reading, and progress monitoring, ensures that students are frequently exposed to strong reading, have frequent chances to experience mastery with a text, and have an awareness of their academic progress. Additionally, the program can be delivered through “hard copy” materials or the use of a computer-based program, which prevents technology resources from becoming a limiting factor. The recommendation from the publisher’s website was 3-5 times per week for 30 to 45 minutes.

2. Skills Addressed

The skills addressed by the program include fluency, accuracy, and comprehension. Each of these skills is a critical area of need for many of our special education students and aligns with the domains identified by the WWC.

3. Program Costs

Pricing for *Read Naturally* materials can be found by visiting the price list at the following link: <http://www.readnaturally.com/pdf/rnOrderForm.pdf>. As was the case above, the team would need to give some thought to the number of materials needed at each level.

4. Program Effectiveness

Based on review by the WCC, the program was assigned a rating of “potentially positive effects” and was assigned an improvement index of +10 in the domain of General Literacy Achievement. Finally, the “potentially positive effects”

reported by the WWC, were based on review of a study that captured program use for grades 3-5 and may not translate to grades 6 – 8.

Peer Assisted Learning Strategies

Program Description

Created by Lynn and Doug Fuchs, Peer Assisted Learning Strategies, or PALS, is a set of collaborative strategies, developed as a supplement to core instruction. Designed to support increased fluency, accuracy, and comprehension, PALS is comprised of three partnered reading strategies. During the first strategy, “passage reading with partners” or “partnered read and retell”, partners alternate between the role of “reader” and “tutor” or “coach”. The reader reads aloud for five minutes, with the coach providing feedback and prompting when necessary. After five minutes, students switch roles and resume the strategy. “Paragraph Shrinking”, the second strategy in the PALS process, requires students to summarize the main idea and sequence of events from a portion of text in 10 words or less. As with partnered read and retell, students alternate roles with one student summarizing and one prompting when needed. The final strategy, “prediction relay”, requires students to make a prediction about upcoming events in the text. After making a prediction, the student reads aloud, summarizes the passage, and with support from the coach, determines if the prediction was accurate. Once again, after five minutes students switch roles and resume. In its entirety, the PALS cycle requires 32 minutes to complete. In each case, the stronger reader assumes the role of coach first in the rotation, to both support the struggling student in reading and to model prompting. Coach or tutor strategies must be explicitly taught to students, as well as the overall PALS process. Unlike previous

programs, PALS does not come with set materials requiring teachers to select texts or passages. Costs associated with the program are minimal, particularly for Gauger, who has staff members capable of providing in-house professional development activities. Resources available through program developers are priced as follows: Grade Level Training Manuals (\$40 to \$44) One –Day Onsite Training (\$1500), Training Videos (\$15/Each) (What Works Clearinghouse, 2012).

Research Finding

Findings reported by the WWC were based on 1 study in the area of adolescent literacy that met evidence standards with reservation. The study examined the impact of PALS delivery on 120 elementary and middle school students from a southern state. The average age of students in the sample was 9.8 years old. The sample included 60 students receiving PALS and 60 students receiving regular reading instruction. Student outcome were measured after 15 weeks of PALS delivery. WWC findings, limited to the comprehension domain, are reported in table 48.

Table 48 PALS		
Domain	Rating of Effectiveness	Improvement Index Rating Average Points
Alphabetics	N/A	N/A
Reading Fluency	N/A	N/A
Comprehension	Potentially Positive Effects	+ 19
General Literacy	N/A	N/A
Achievement		

As indicated earlier, an in-house program evaluation was completed for PALS. The evaluation, completed following year two of implementation, examined both fidelity

of implementation and student outcomes associated with delivery. For implementation fidelity, findings pointed to inconsistent application of the PALS strategies across Gauger classrooms and inconsistent teacher engagement across classrooms. Not surprisingly, findings related to student outcomes were inconsistent, reflecting the inconsistencies in implementation. It is important to note that PALS was delivered to students scoring below proficiency on DCAS, although students were not necessarily identified as special education (What Works Clearinghouse, 2012).

Implementation Considerations

1. Program Delivery

In terms of program delivery, PALS could be delivered to special education students through our current schedule for 32 minutes every other day. In addition, student training materials related to the PALS reading strategies are already developed. The challenge, as in years past, would be to ensure consistency in application of the strategies across multiple classrooms.

2. *Skills Addressed*

The strategies address fluency, accuracy, and comprehension, which are critical skills. These skills align with the domains developed by the WWC and are similar to skills addressed by other programs in this review.

3. Program Costs

Program costs are minimal, particularly because Gauger has the materials needed for the training of both teachers and students. No additional technology is needed, further limiting costs.

4. Program Effectiveness

WWC findings suggest that PALS has “potentially positive effects” for adolescent readers and the average growth for the academic index was one of the higher values for any program. Findings from Gauger’s in-house program evaluation were inconsistent and were impacted by inconsistencies in implementation.

Reciprocal Teaching

Program Description

Described as an “interactive instructional practice”, Reciprocal Teaching, or RT, engages students in a collaborative process around a text. Students are trained in use of the following “comprehension strategies”: Summarizing, Questioning, Clarifying, and Predicting. In the early stages of training the teacher assumes greater responsibility and gradually places more responsibility on students. During summarizing, students identify key points from a few sentences, paragraphs, or an entire text, depending on teacher request. Through questioning, students identify important information and develop questions to test their own, or a peer’s, level of understanding. Clarifying provides the opportunity to seek assistance after identifying the language or concepts responsible for the confusion. The final strategy, predicting

encourages student to predict what will happen next in a text, based on previous events (What Works Clearinghouse, 2012).

Research Findings

Review of 164 studies by the WWC yielded five studies that were identified for review. The first four studies presented, met evidence standards, while the fifth study met evidence standards with reservations. The first study, a randomized control trial, examined the effectiveness of RT on a sample of 18 students (5th – 8th) in Alaska. For the purposes of research, students were randomly assigned to one of the following three groups: Reciprocal Teaching, Reciprocal Teaching with semantic mapping or SMART, and the control group (no specific intervention). Student outcomes were measured after 25 days of delivery. The second study, a randomized controlled trial, explored the effectiveness of delivery with a group of 4th, 5th, and, 6th grade Vietnamese-American students. Students, selected from two public schools in Northern California, were randomly assigned to an RT group or a control group. Measurements for purposes of determining effectiveness for the 29 RT students and 21 control group students were collected after 20 days of delivery. The third study, a randomized control trial, explored the impact of RT delivery on a sample of 5th grade students from the mid-west. Students were randomly assigned to an RT group or control group, and in both cases received instruction from the researcher. WWC determinations were based on the review of data for 20 students receiving RT and 19 students from the control group. Outcomes were measured after 25 days of program delivery. The fourth study, also a randomized control trial, examined the impact of RT by comparing outcomes for 36 students receiving RT and 36 students receiving

instruction in the control group. Students in the sample were selected from 4th and 7th grade classrooms and were English speaking Canadians. Outcomes for both groups were measured after 13 “classroom sessions”. The final study, a randomized control trial, examined the impact of RT on fifth grade students in a Midwestern school. Students were randomly assigned to an RT group or a control group and results were collected following 25 days of implementation. WWC findings were based on the results of 20 students from the RT group and 19 students from the control group. Table 49 summarizes WWC findings based on the studies presented above (What Works Clearinghouse, 2012).

Table 49 Reciprocal Teaching		
Domain	Rating of Effectiveness	Improvement Index Rating Average Points
Alphabetics	N/A	N/A
Reading Fluency	N/A	N/A
Comprehension	Mixed Effects	+6
General Literacy Achievement	N/A	N/A

Implementation Considerations

1. Program Delivery

As was the case with PALS, RT would fit into our current schedule and both teacher and student training materials are already developed. Also, like PALS, the program does not provide scripted lessons, which presents challenges with consistency of implementation.

2. Skills Addressed

The skills addressed by RT include: Summarizing, Questioning, Clarifying, and Predicting, are clearly important skills for students. However, many of Gauger's special education students struggle with skills which are prerequisite in nature to these skills. Gauger's past use of RT was for enrichment, supporting students that scored at or above proficiency.

3. Program Costs

The costs associated with RT, similar to PALS, would be minimal as there are no costs associated with the purchase of additional technology or materials to support the program. Also, Gauger already has the necessary professional development activities to support teacher training.

4. Program Effectiveness

In terms of program effectiveness, WWC findings are inconclusive, with RT earning a rating of "Mixed Effects" and an improvement index of +6. In addition, findings from the in-house program evaluation found inconsistent implementation and student outcomes.

5. Language!

Program Description

"*Language!*", developed by Voyager Learning, is designed to support students in grades 3 – 12 and is recommended for use with students score below the 40th

percentile on standardized literacy assessments. Skills addressed by the program, referred to as the “six steps from sound to text” are as follows: (1) Phonemic Awareness and Phonics (decoding), (2) Word Recognition, Spelling (word encoding), (3) Vocabulary and Morphology (word meaning), (4) Grammar and Usage (form and function), (5) Listening and Reading Comprehension, and (6) Speaking and Writing. In total the program contains six levels, identified as A-F, with each level comprised of 6 kits containing 10 lessons. Students are placed based on pre-test results in one of three levels as follows:

Level A – Students identified as deficient in Basic Decoding.

Level C – Students identified as proficient in sound/symbols, but with deficiencies in word analysis.

Level E – Students in grades 7-12 that are identified as proficient in sound/symbols and word analysis.

Delivery of the program is recommended for 90 minutes each day, with time being allotted to each of the six steps. In addition to print materials, there is an online component referred to as *VocabJourney*, which is supplemental and supports vocabulary development. Costs associated with the program are as follows: Teacher Materials/Level (\$353) and Student Materials/Student (\$69) (What Works Clearinghouse, 2013).

Research Findings

A total of 16 studies were considered by the WWC that examined the effectiveness of *Language!* in the topic area of adolescent literacy. From this 16, one study met WWC standard with reservations. The study explored program effectiveness

in the Miami-Dade County Public School District. Schools selected for study were identified as Title 1 and were utilizing the program to support struggling students through their Intensive Reading Plus (IR+), a 90 minute intervention delivered to students scoring below proficiency on the Florida Comprehension Assessment Tests (FCAT). The study included students from grades 6-10; however, the findings presented by the WWC include data for 9th and 10th grade students from a sample including 8 treatment schools and 10 control schools. The study contained two samples, one based on pre-test scores from the administration of Test of Silent Contextual Reading Fluency (TOSCRF) and one based on pre-test scores from administration of the FCAT. The TOSCRF sample contained 320 students, while the FCAT sample had a total of 316 students. Each sample participated in the IR+ intervention for 1 academic year prior to data collection. Table 50 presents findings for each domain (What Works Clearinghouse, 2013):

Table 50 Language		
Domain	Rating of Effectiveness	Improvement Index Rating Average Points
Alphabetics	N/A	N/A
Reading Fluency	No discernible effects	0
Comprehension	No discernible effects	-5
General Literacy	N/A	N/A
Achievement		

Implementation Considerations

The review of *Language!* and related research produced the following factors for consideration:

1. Program Delivery

The program is recommended for students in grades 3 – 12 which would provide a consistent intervention for all special education students. Also, the program recommends delivery for 90 minutes daily, a structure that could be nearly accomplished in our current schedule; but would leave special education students with time for elective opportunities.

2. Skills Addressed

Compared to other programs in the review, *Language!* addresses a greater variety of skills including the following: (1) Phonemic Awareness and Phonics (decoding), (2) Word Recognition, Spelling (word encoding), (3) Vocabulary and Morphology (word meaning), (4) Grammar and Usage (form and function), and (5) Listening and Reading Comprehension, and (6) Speaking and Writing.

3. Program Costs

Cost for materials to support *Language!* can be calculated by visiting the following link: <http://store.cambiumlearning.com/language-fourth-edition/>. Again, thought would need be given to the volume of materials to be ordered at each level.

4. Program Effectiveness

The effectiveness rating produced by the WWC, was described as “No discernible effects”, with an improvement index of 0 and -5 for Reading Fluency and Comprehension respectively.

6. Reading Mastery

Developed by McGraw-Hill, *Reading Mastery*, formerly DISTAR, is available in three program formats designed to provide direct instruction to student populations in the K-6 setting. *Reading Mastery Classic* is a k-3 program designed to support beginning readers in letter sounds, segmenting words, blending sounds to words, vocabulary development, and comprehension skills. *Reading Mastery Plus*, developed for K-6, focuses on developing reading, writing, spelling, and language skills. *Reading Mastery Signature Edition*, a k-5 program, has lessons that address the following strands: Reading, Oral Language/Language Arts, and Literature. Developers indicate that programs can be utilized as pull-out materials or as a core language arts program. Programs begin with a placement assessment and students are grouped by reading level for program completion. Lessons are typically 35-40 minutes in length and are comprised of multiple activities (7-9) across strands. Lessons are scripted and adhere to the following format: (1) Modeling of New Content, (2) Guided Practice, and (3) Individual Practice (What Works Clearinghouse, 2010).

Research Findings

To investigate the effectiveness of *Reading Mastery* with adolescent students, the WWC reviewed 175 studies which investigated the use of *Reading Mastery* with adolescent readers. From this review, two studies were identified, one meeting evidence standards, and one meeting evidence standards with reservations. The first study examined the effects of the delivery of *Reading Mastery Signature Edition* versus delivery of the Scott Foresman Basal Reading Program for fourth graders. The

study compared outcomes for 29 students receiving instruction through *Reading Mastery* and 28 students receiving instruction through the Forsman Basal program. Student outcomes were reported after 5 months of implementation. The second study investigated the effects of *Reading Mastery* in three grades across 3 northwestern schools. For purposes of the study, each of the *Reading Mastery* schools were matched with a comparison school (similar in demographics), which was not delivering *Reading Mastery* to students. The WWC selected two grades on which to base findings. The 4th grade group contained 71 students who completed *Reading Mastery* and 71 students from the control group. The 5th grade group contained 81 students that received the treatment and 81 students that were in the control group. Outcomes for both groups were measured after one year of implementation. Evidence standards for reading fluency and comprehension were met and WWC findings from the two studies are summarized in table 51 (What Works Clearinghouse, 2013):

Table 51 Reading Mastery		
Domain	Rating of Effectiveness	Improvement Index Rating Average Points
Alphabetics	N/A	N/A
Reading Fluency	Potentially Positive Effects	+19
Comprehension	No Discernible Effects	-7
General Literacy	N/A	N/A
Achievement		

Implementation Considerations

The review of the *Reading Mastery* description and related research produced the following factors for consideration:

1. Program Delivery

The program is designed for students in K-6, which would require Gauger to invest in a second program or intervention to support the needs of 7th and 8th grade students. Second, recommendations related to the delivery and duration of the program, 35-40 minutes daily, could be met through are current master schedule. Third, the program follows a 3 phase format including the following: Modeling of New Content, (2) Guided Practice, and (3) Individual Practice; a structure that would provide consistency for special education students.

2. Skills Addressed

The program addresses the following skills: Reading, Oral Language/Language Arts, and Literature. More specifically, *Reading Mastery Plus*, the k-6 program, places an emphasis on reading, writing, spelling,

3. Program Costs

Pricing can be determined by visiting the following link:
<https://www.mheonline.com/programMHID/view/0076020770/>. As indicated earlier, materials only support students up to 6th grade.

4. Program Effectiveness

Evidence of effectiveness revealed by the WWC was mixed. Reading fluency was assigned a rating of “potentially positive effects”, with an improvement index of

+19, while comprehension received a rating of “no discernible effects” and an improvement index of -7.

7. Project CRISS

Program Description

Described as a “professional development program”, *Project CRISS* (CReating Independence through Student-owned Strategies) seeks to improve student outcomes in grades 3-12 by improving teacher practice. Developers highlight that use of *Project CRISS* does not require the purchase of materials or even changes to curriculum, but rather change in teacher practice. Specifically, *Project CRISS* provides support and development around the following: (1) monitoring learning to assess when students have understood the content, (2) integrating new information with prior knowledge, and (3) becoming actively involved in the learning process. Training for teachers provides support around choosing content, setting goals and objectives, assessing learning, and the planning process. This training is designed to provide teachers with the skills necessary to help students understand the learning process and to assist them in transferring strategies to individual classroom activities (What Works Clearinghouse, 2010).

Research Overview

To explore the effectiveness of *Project CRISS*, the WCC reviewed 31 studies related to effectiveness with adolescent learners. From this review, 2 studies were selected that met WCC evidence standards. The first was a random assignment study containing students from 4th, 6th, 8th and 11th grade. The sample was comprised of

students from rural Montana, a middle class community in central Florida, and a suburban community in located in Virginia. Within each school, teachers were assigned to either deliver *Project CRISS* strategies or to deliver regular instruction. Effectiveness ratings were based on a comparison of 120 students from the 6 classrooms that received the treatment to the 111 students from the 6 classroom that represented the control group. In both cases, outcomes were measured after 18 weeks of instruction. The second study was a randomized controlled trial measuring not only the impact of *Project CRISS* , but three other programs for 5th grade students. The sample was drawn from 89 schools, randomly assigned by researchers in low income school districts. Students in the sample were assigned to one of the following programs or the control group: Project CRISS®, ReadAbout, Read for Real, or Reading for Knowledge. Effectiveness ratings for this study were based on the 1,155 students from 17 schools that participated in *Project CRISS* compared to the 1,183 students, from 21 schools that comprised the control group. Data collection for both groups occurred following 9 months of implementation or instruction. In terms of domains, evidence standards were met for only comprehension. Table 52 summarizes WWC finding for *Project CRISS*: (What Works Clearinghouse, 2010)

Table 52 Project CRISS		
Domain	Rating of Effectiveness	Improvement Index Rating Average Points
Alphabetics	N/A	N/A
Reading Fluency	N/A	N/A
Comprehension	Potentially Positive Effects	+20
General Literacy Achievement	N/A	N/A

Implementation Considerations

The review of the *Project CRISS* intervention report produced the following factors for consideration:

1. Program Delivery

In terms of program delivery, *Project CRISS* is recommended for grades 3 – 12 and thus would provide a consistent intervention for all special education students. Also, the focus of *CRISS* is to provide new strategies to teachers through professional development, which could be applied across all content areas. Finally, there are no set materials or delivery cycle that must be adhered to for implementation.

2. Skills Addressed

As indicated above, *Project CRISS* supports student achievement by addressing the skill-set of teachers. Specifically, the professional development activities support the following: monitoring learning to assess when students have understood the content, (2) integrating new information with prior knowledge, and (3) begin actively involved in the learning process.

3. Program Costs

Information related to program costs was not available through the WWC intervention report. Information related to the costs associated with *Project CRISS*, obtained from the publisher's website is as follows:

- Option 1 (\$55/Teacher) – Purchase of Teacher Materials and a 1-year membership to the online resource center. This pricing includes in-house training.

- Option 2 (\$70/Teacher) Purchase of Teacher Materials and 1-year membership to online resource center. This pricing includes training from a Project CRISS representative.

4. Program Effectiveness

As it relates to program effectiveness, *Project CRISS*, earned a rating of “potentially positive effects” and had an improvement index value of +20 for comprehension.

Conclusion:

As indicated earlier the purpose of this document was to identify “evidenced based practices” to address the literacy needs of special education students at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School. To this end, I reviewed the following programs, identified through the What Works Clearing House: (1) Corrective Reading, (2) Read Naturally, (3) PALS (4) RT (5) Language!, (6) Reading Mastery, and (7) Project CRISS. To focus the review, 4 criteria (program delivery, skills addressed, program cost, and program effectiveness) were identified against which to evaluate programs. The primary source of information for each was intervention reports published by the WWC, which provided summary information in several key areas.

Programs Removed from Consideration

Based on this review, five programs were removed from consideration and two were identified for recommendation to the administrative team. Table 53 provides a brief rationale for each program removed from consideration.

Table 53 . Programs Removed from Consideration	
Program	Rationale for Removal
Corrective Reading	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The frequency and duration recommendation of 45 minutes/4 times per weeks cannot be met. 2. Program effectiveness, as described by the WWC was identified as “no discernible effects” and achievement index was low for each domain measured.
Reciprocal Teaching	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.No materials or resources provided to support planning and pacing. 2.The higher order skills addressed by RT may be too big of a leap for struggling students. 3. The WWC effectiveness rating, based on 5 studies, was “mixed effects” and the score for the improvement index was +6 for comprehension.
Language!	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The frequency and duration recommendation of 90 minutes every day cannot be met. 2. The WWC effectiveness rating was “no discernible effects” and the improvement index rating was -5 for comprehension, the only domain assessed.
Reading Mastery	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reading Mastery is a K-6 program, meaning that Gauger would need to identify additional programs for use in 7th and 8th grade.
Project CRISS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Project CRISS is a collection of strategies that would require intense PD for teachers and intense support and monitoring from the administrative team.

Programs Recommended for Consideration

Through the review process, *Read Naturally* and *Peer Assisted Learning Strategies* were identified for consideration by the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team.

The two programs represent different approaches to addressing a similar problem and the following is summary of the factors that support use the use of each program.

Read Naturally

The recommendation to explore use of *Read Naturally* is based on several factors. First, the program can be delivered via “hardcopy” materials, which I recommend. This would limit the strain on Gauger’s computer resources which are both limited and in high demand. Second, the program is designed to improve fluency (decoding), accuracy, and comprehension, which are prerequisite skills that support improved reading. Students develop these skills through a cycle of modeling, repeated reading, and progress monitoring. I believe this is a favorable structure for struggling students. The modeling component provides struggling readers with exposure to good reading, while the repeated reading stage allows struggling students to experience success with reading. The progress monitoring phase ensures that both students and teachers are aware of progress made and could easily be aligned with our “mindset” efforts. Third, the structure of the program and the fact that materials are developed for teachers by *Read Naturally*, will support implementation fidelity and reduce the time needed for planning. Fourth, Gauger can align its schedule to meet the recommendations for frequency and duration associated with the program. Finally, measures of effectiveness from the WWC were positive and even though this result was drawn from a study of implementation with 3 – 5 grade students, I believe that the program has the potential to have a positive impact at Gauger.

Peer Assisted Learning Strategies

As it relates to PALS, the recommendation for consideration was based on several factors. First, duration and frequency recommendations for PALS could easily fit into our current master schedule. Second, the partnered strategies (Read and Retell, Paragraph Shrinking, and Prediction Relay) support improved fluency and comprehension, which are prerequisite to good reading. Third, there would be virtually no costs associated with the use of PALS as the program does not require materials, and professional development activities can be delivered by Gauger staff. Also, materials for student training have already been created and are familiar to teachers. Finally, the WWC effectiveness rating for PALS was “potentially positive effects” and the improvement index was +19 for the comprehension domain.

Next Steps

As indicated above, *Read Naturally* and *PALS* were identified as programs for consideration by the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team. Regardless of which direction the team decides to go there are some additional actions the team will need to take in preparation for implementation.

In the case of *Read Naturally* the team must determine which delivery model, hardcopy (recommended) or computer based, will be utilized. This will require a review of our current and projected technology capacity, as well as reflection around the master schedule. Once this determination has been made, the second action is to identify the number of hardcopy materials or software licenses that will be needed to support implementation. This will require review of our projected enrollment. If the use of “hardcopy” materials is selected, the administrative team must determine how many resources to purchase at each level. Third, the administrative team must review

the costs associated with implementation and identify potential funding sources to allow for the purchase of necessary materials or resources (i.e. technology). Fourth, the team must reflect on staffing and master scheduling considerations in preparation for implementation. As it currently stands, a special education student would not have an opportunity for exposure to the program due to scheduling. However, the potential is there and the team must prioritize experiences for special education students to ensure their literacy needs are met. Finally, the team must identify potential professional development needs associated with use of a new program. While I anticipate that needs will be lessened due to the structure and materials provided by *Read Naturally*, it would be naïve to assume that support will not be needed. To anticipate professional development needs, the team will review materials with the instructional coach and plan support for potentially challenging areas of implementation.

For PALS there is less to consider because much of the work around student and teacher training has already been completed and cost associated with implementation are minimal. However, past experience suggest that ensuring implementation fidelity is a critical and difficult part of the process. Past efforts were aimed at school-wide implementation and thus required more of the administrative team from a support and monitoring perspective. A targeted effort aimed at special education students would limit support and monitoring to just 8 classrooms, which seems more manageable. That said, I believe the administrative team must identify a plan to ensure consistent monitoring and support of these eight classrooms or outcomes will be similar to past efforts.

Conclusion

In the end, the administrative team has a choice to make between two different pathways. Through use of *Read Naturally*, the administrative team can provide teachers with a scripted and sequenced program to support special education students, reducing the need for teachers to develop or locate resources. On the other hand, through *Peer Assisted Learning Strategies*, the team can re-invest in partnered strategies and with the benefit of knowledge from previous implementation efforts to offer support to special education students with little to no cost. In either case, these efforts will be critical in supporting these students as we continue roll out of Common Core State Standards.

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Appendix J

ANALYSIS OF STUDENT EFFICACY AND MINDSET

Introduction:

Entering the 2012-2013 school-year the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team began efforts to establish a comprehensive school-wide literacy program. In support of this goal, the team made significant changes to the master schedule and planned extensive professional development to support the use of Peer Assisted Learning Strategies and Reciprocal Teaching. Although these efforts are critical steps in developing a comprehensive literacy program, they do nothing to address the issue of student motivation. In *Reading next—A Vision for Action and Research in Middle and High School Literacy*, Biancarosa and Snow acknowledge the need for “Motivation and Self Directed Learning” on behalf of students. To foster this self-direction, Biancarosa and Snow make several suggestions including: providing students with independent reading time, allowing students to select articles or texts themselves, and the use of articles that are relevant to students (Biancarosa & Snow, 2006). Although I see value in these strategies, I believe that many students have experienced failure for so long that they have given up the hope that they can become a strong reader. In my opinion, empowering these students will require school-wide efforts to change the mindset of students, and some staff, regarding the ability to improve academically. That said, the purpose of this artifact is to establish a research base to support continued efforts, reflect on previous efforts, and develop recommendations for next steps.

Research:

Self-efficacy, defined by Schunk as “an individual's judgments of his or her capabilities to perform given actions” has implications in the classroom and beyond. In his 1991 article entitled *Self Efficacy and Academic Motivation*, Schunk describes

self-efficacy as a vital component in a broad range of areas, including but not limited to: social skills, smoking cessation, athletic performance, and coping with fear (Schunk, 1991). Schunk also indicates that a “low sense of efficacy” can lead to task avoidance, while those feeling “efficacious” will likely work harder and be more persistent in task completion (Schunk, 1991). Zimmerman, Bandura, and Martinez-Pons describe the same phenomena in their article *Self-Motivation for Academic Attainment: The Role of Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Personal Goal Setting*, adding that self-efficacy “influences the level of goal challenge people set for themselves, the amount of effort they mobilize, and their persistence in the face of difficulties” (Zimmerman, 1992). More recent efforts to understand self-efficacy have described “an individual's judgments of his or her capabilities to perform given actions” as a “mindset”. Proponents of this model have identified a growth and a fixed mindset. Individuals with a fixed mindset view intelligence as an “inborn trait” and believe that their academic abilities, or those of others, are predetermined. On the other hand, those with a growth mindset view intelligence as something they, or others, “can develop” over time (Dweck, 2010). Researchers believe that an individual’s mindset greatly influences their experience in educational situations and that there are distinct characteristics for each mindset. Figure 54 compares characteristics of students with the fixed versus those with a growth mindset (Dweck, 2007).

Table 54 Student Characteristics: Fixed vs. Growth Mindset	
Fixed	Growth
View mistakes as a lack of ability.	1. Seek out challenges.
Equate hard work with low intelligence.	2. Value effort and hard work.
Respond to setbacks poorly.	3. Eager to address areas of weakness.

It is not difficult to imagine the behaviors described above could impact the actions of students and their potential for academic growth. Fortunately, research has also identified actions that schools can take to assist students in developing self-efficacy. One important strategy that schools can implement is goal setting. *In Self Efficacy and Academic Motivation*, Schunk describes the link between goal setting activities and improved self-efficacy, highlighting that improvement can be established through student created or teacher created goals under the correct circumstances. Schunk indicates that the motivational impact of goal setting depends on the proximity, specificity, and difficulty of the goal. Motivation increases when the proximity is “close at hand” as opposed to long term, when the goal includes specific performance measures as opposed to general goals, and when goals are challenging for students to attain. Schunk also indicates that there is evidence to suggest that student created goals may result in increased investment and motivation (Schunk, 1991). A second strategy schools can employ is the use of “attributional feedback”. Attribution feedback seeks to increase self-efficacy and motivation by linking progress to the effort put forth by students (Schunk, 1991). Dweck’s work also emphasizes the need to link academic progress to student effort rather than intelligence. In the article *Boosting Achievement with Messages that Motivate*, Dweck describes how intelligence praise (i.e. “you’re really good at that”) can reinforce or develop a fixed mindset in students, resulting in our reinforcing the behaviors listed in Figure 1. The alternative described by Dweck is to praise the “process”, which could include the “effort, strategies, concentration, choices, persistence” displayed or utilized by the student (Dweck, 2007). A third strategy available to schools is to provide direct instruction to students about the fixed and growth mindset, including the brain science

that makes intellectual growth possible. According to Dweck,, simply making students aware of their ability to improve can result in increased efficacy and improved effort and persistence in the classroom (Dweck, 2007).

Vision 2015 Efforts:

As a member of the Vision 2015 Network, Gauger’s efforts to affect student efficacy and motivation began in the fall of the 2011-2012 school–year. These efforts consisted of professional development activities for staff, student goal setting activities, and the posting of growth mindset statements. The following is a brief description of the taken during the 2011-2012 school-year.

Professional Development Activities

Initial staff development efforts were focused on identifying “fixed mindset” statements that attributed learning to innate abilities and were frequently utilized by staff. Staff participated in reflective activities and worked collaboratively to develop replacement statements, which connected learning to effort.

Student Goal Setting

In an effort to promote self-reflection and awareness around academic achievement, all Gauger students completed goal setting activities. The goal setting activities were facilitated by teachers and were introduced in January and completed again following the first round of spring DCAS testing. Students were asked to establish goals around both report card grades and DCAS growth.

Posting of “Growth Mindset Statements”

In addition to the activities described above growth mindset statements were also posted throughout the building to further support the efforts identified above.

Reflection on 2011-2012 Efficacy Efforts

Looking back, there were clear shortcomings with 2011-2012 efforts to create student efficacy. First, professional development activities were “one and done” in nature and aside from goal setting and the poster efforts, little was done to encourage internalization amongst staff or students. Second, students received no direct instruction about Carol Dweck’s work and the science that supports the conclusions of her and others. Finally, the goal setting process for students failed to include any discussion or reflection about steps or necessary actions to reach the identified goals; which limited the impact of the process.

2012-2013 Efforts

Recognizing the potential for improvement on previous efforts, the Vision Team selected the “Creating a Culture of Student Efficacy Pathway” as its focus for the 2012-2013 school-year. Building on the work of the previous year, 2012 – 2013 efforts included the following:

Pre & Post Mindset Surveys for Staff and Students

To identify the mindset of both staff and students, as well as to support the need for our work, a pre-survey was administered. The results of the pre-survey (for both staff and students) were presented to staff prior to the beginning of professional development activities. Post-surveys were administered to measure changes in efficacy amongst both staff and students. An analysis of pre and post survey data is presented below.

ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES

Professional development activities were expanded to support teachers in the delivery of lessons related to the growth mindset and the goal setting process. Gauger utilized PLC's to deliver the professional development to staff. Table 55 summarizes professional development activities for the 2012 – 2013 school-year.

Table 55 Creating a Culture of Student Efficacy Professional Development Activities			
Delivery Date:	Topic:	Activities	Purpose:
1/4/2013	Growth Mindset	1. Teacher Mindset Survey 2. Discussion/Lesson: Fixed vs. Growth Mindset 3. Card Sort 4. Article 5. Review Results to Student Mindset Pre-Survey 6. Lesson Planning 7. Review website 8. Review lessons for Block 10	1. Review student pre-survey results to establish the baseline for student understanding related to the growth mindset. 2. Increase teacher understanding of Fixed v. Growth Mindset. 3. Provide and review activities to introduce growth mindset to students.
1/10/2013	Growth Mindset	1. Review TEACHER Pre-survey results 2. Flip Book 3. Debrief on lessons 4. Next round of lessons	1. Review teacher pre-survey results to establish the baseline for teacher understanding related to the growth mindset. 2. Review and introduction of mindset statement “flip book” to provide teacher with a quick reference guide of growth mindset statements for use in their classroom. 3. Debrief of first round of

			Mindset lessons. 4. Review and discussion related to the next round of Mindset lessons.
1/16/2013	Goal Setting	1. Review of Student Goal Setting / Goal Doing procedures. 2. Review Student Goal Sheets 3. Review Student Scenario Cards 4. Review & Revise Current GPS Sheets 5. Introduce next Round of Lessons 6. Time to Plan Next Round of Lessons	1. To review planned goal setting activities to be completed with students. 2. Revise the GPS sheet based on teacher feedback. 3. Review next round of mindset lessons to be delivered during the literacy block.
3/20/2013	Review Progress	1. Warm Up - Teacher Mindset POST Survey	1. Review Teacher and Student post-survey results and discuss next steps for 2013-2014.

Growth Mindset Lesson Plans and Student Activities

Unlike the previous year, 2012-2013 efforts included lesson plans designed to introduce students to the brain research that supports the growth mindset. Lesson plans from Step it Up to Thrive were identified by the Vision Team and were modeled during PLC sessions before being delivered through the school-wide literacy block. Activities incorporated the use of technology and student friendly readings to introduce brain research and the growth mindset.

Goal Setting Lessons and Student Activities

In addition to being provided with lesson plans to “teach” the growth mindset, teachers were also provided lessons to support the goal setting process. These lessons were also based on resources from the Step it Up to Thrive organization. Each class also created their own mindset quote, with several quotes being selected for display the following year.

Internalization Efforts

To battle the “one and done” feel and assist with the internalization of the growth mindset, several additional actions were added this year. First, “mindset” announcements were implemented to ensure that students received the message through multiple channels. Additionally, this announcement would serve as a message to staff that this initiative was ongoing. Second, a Mindset Walk-through tool was developed in alignment with the student efficacy rubric provided by the Vision Network. The tool was developed for use as a peer to peer protocol, allowing teachers to see mindset strategies in other classrooms and reflect on their own efforts. A final aspect of 2012-2013 implementation efforts was the continued use of mindset posters throughout the building. Despite being identified as ineffective the previous year, combined with the efforts described above, I believe that these posters can help to communicate the message.

Analysis of Pre and Post Survey Data:

As indicated above a pre and post survey was conducted with both students and staff to provide insight into the overall mindset of people at Gauger-Cobbs Middle School. Both the staff and student survey were adapted from resources provided by the Vision 2015 Network. For students, the survey contained 8 items and used a Likert

Scale model to measure agreement or disagreement with 8 statements. Four of the statements were phrased as growth mindset statements and four were phrased as fixed mindset statements. Student selected from the following responses “Disagree a lot”, “Disagree”, “Agree” and “Agree A lot” for each statement.

Student Survey – Pre and Post Analysis

As relates to student survey results, Table 56 compares the percent of students in agreement with growth mindset statements on the pre and post survey. For the purpose of analysis the percent totals for “Agree” and “Agree a Lot” were combined as both represent agreement with the statement.

Table 56 . Comparison of Pre and Post Survey Student Responses to Growth Mindset Statements			
Survey Item	Pre-Survey % Agree A lot or Agree	Post-Survey % Agree A lot or Agree	% Change Pre to Post
1.No matter how much intelligence you have, you can always change it.	83.5	85.8	+2.3
3.I like my work best when it makes me think hard.	47.7	60.7	+13
5 I like work that I'll learn more from....even if I make a lot of mistakes.	75.7	74.6	-1.1
7 When something is hard, it just makes me want to work more on it, not less.	60.1	59.9	-.2

Table 57 compares the percent of students in agreement with fixed mindset statements for the pre and post survey. As was the case above the percent totals for “Agree” and “Agree a Lot” were combined for analysis.

Table 57 Comparison of Pre and Post Student Survey Responses to Fixed Mindset Statements			
Survey Item	Pre-Survey % Agree A lot or Agree	Post-Survey % Agree A lot or Agree	% Change Pre to Post
2. You can learn new things, but you cannot really change your basic level of intelligence.	27.1	15.2	-11.9
4. I like my work best when I can do it really well without too much trouble.	87.5	73.6	-13.9
6. I like my work best when I can do it perfectly without making any mistakes.	77.7	64.4	-13.3
8. To tell the truth, when I work hard, it makes me feel as though I’m not very smart.	26	26.7	+.7

The data captured in table 2 and table 3 suggests that the mindset message was not entirely received by students. While the pre to post changes captured in Table 2 do not provide a clear indication of a mindset shift amongst students, the 13% growth observed for statement 3 is the largest change, plus or minus, and is promising. Also, agreement with fixed mindset statements, captured in Table 3, dropped meaningfully

for statements 2, 4, and 6, suggesting that portions of the student body received the message.

Teacher Survey – Pre and Post Analysis

To further measure mindset changes within students and the overall classroom, staff completed a pre and post survey. The teacher survey consisted of 15 questions designed to measure the “Classroom Mindset”. The first three survey items were in a “yes or no” response format and questioned teachers about student understanding of mindset and the goal setting process. The remaining 12 survey items measured teacher perceptions of their own practice and incorporation of growth mindset strategies.

Table 58 summarizes pre to post changes measured by survey items 1-3 of the staff survey.

Table 58 Teacher Survey Data for Survey Items # 1-3.			
Survey Item	Pre-Survey - % Responding Yes	Post-Survey - % Responding Yes	% Change Pre to Post
1. My Block 10 students have an understanding of the 2 mindsets of intelligence.	10	96	+86
2. In my Block 10 class, the students know and understand the goal setting process.	22	72	+50
3. My Block 10 students have completed a goal setting worksheet for reading and math.	12	88	+76

From the data in table 58, it is clear that from the pre to post response changes, the vast majority of staff exposed students to the mindset lessons and goal setting activities. Additionally, this data suggests that the perception amongst teachers was that students had an understanding of the growth (and fixed) mindset, as well as the goal setting process. Finally, it does indicate that some students may not have been exposed to the lessons and activities, as only 88% of teachers indicated that students had completed goal setting. As for survey items 4-15, teachers were asked to choose one of the following for each statement: “Never”, “Rarely”, “Sometimes”, “Usually” or “Always”. Data was analyzed by grouping the responses of “Never”, “Rarely”, and “Sometimes” and the responses for “Usually” or “Always”. This pattern was chosen as the former suggests an inconsistent classroom practice, while the latter suggests a consistent practice. Table 59 summarizes the pre to post changes captured by the teacher survey. To simplify the analysis, only the percentages for those responding “Usually” or “Always” is presented in the data table.

Table 59 Teacher Survey Data for Survey Items # 4-15.			
Survey Item	Pre-Survey – % Responding Usually or Always	Post-Survey % Responding Usually or Always	Change in % Responding Usually or Always
4. Students are graded on assignments when learning something new.	24	20.9	- 3.1
5. Students are provided rubrics in student-friendly language before they begin a major assignment.	45	44.2	- .3
6. Students are encouraged to ask the teacher why the class is learning a topic.	70	69.7	- .3
7. All students are expected to reach a common high standard but they are given different levels of support and time to accomplish it.	67	76.7	+9.3
8. Students receive recognition for effort in structured ways, such as rewards, or grading practices.	67	72.1	+5.1
9. Students are told that they are smart when they perform well.	22	11.7	- 10.3
10. When students make mistakes or give a wrong answer, they get specific feedback on how to improve.	77	79	+ 2
11. Students are praised for completing	12	2.3	- 9.7

work quickly.			
12. Students who perform most highly on tests receive the greatest public recognition.	20	14	- 6
13. Students who make the most individual progress receive public recognition from the teacher.	35	41.9	+ 6.9
14. Students grades reflect mastery of specific standards rather than average or sum or points earned.	35	46.5	+ 11.5
15. Students tease each other about poor performance, mistakes, or being slow.	6	4.7	- 1.3

* Note for Survey Items 4, 9, 11, 12, & 15 decreases reflect positive outcomes*

As was the case with the student survey, the teacher data from table 5 does not provide an overwhelming sense that the growth mindset has become rooted at Gauger-Cobbs. Responses to questions 5 and 6 illustrate that the practice of some teachers has remained unchanged despite professional development activities. However, several of the responses do suggest that teachers have begun to incorporate growth mindset strategies into their classrooms. For example, changes in responses for questions 8 – 13 demonstrates that teachers have begun to re-think how praise and acknowledgement should be utilized in their classrooms.

Reflections on Survey Data:

Although the data presented above indicates that Gauger has yet to succeed in establishing a culture of student efficacy, there is evidence of progress in both the staff and students survey responses. First, there was a double digit decrease on the post survey for students choosing “Agree” and “Agree a Lot” in response to three of the four fixed mindset statements. Second, there was a 13% increase in agreement with the following statement: “I like my work best when it makes me think hard.” Together with the negative trend observed for fixed mindset statements, I believe that this supports movement towards the growth mindset on the part of Gauger’s student body. As for the staff, there is evidence of shifting beliefs among teachers as it relates to the use of praise in the classroom. Pre to post changes for survey items 8, 9, 11, 12, & 13 suggest that Gauger staff see increased merit in praising effort and individual progress as a result of completion of the professional development activities in both 2011-2012 and 2012-2013. This is particularly encouraging because praising effort is a critical component in establishing a growth mindset and observable buy-in from teachers will only enhance student progress.

Next Steps:

At first glance the progress discussed above may seem disappointing after two years’ worth of professional development, mindset activities, and goal setting activities. However, it is unlikely that changing the mindset of staff and students, or changing anything for that matter, will happen without roadblocks. Regardless, this is a critical juncture and one in which growth mindset efforts must be expanded. With this in mind, I have developed the following recommendations for the 2013-2014 school-year.

Mindset Assemblies (October)

Results from the staff post survey suggest that the majority of students were exposed to the mindset lessons during the 2012-2013 school-year; however, it also indicates that about 12% of students did not participate. Also, it is likely that there was significant variance in the delivery of the mindset lessons and thus student outcomes. To ensure a consistent message at the onset of the 2013-2014 school-year, I recommend that efforts are launched through grade level or team assemblies facilitated by the principal. The assembly (no more than 45 minutes) could be used to present incoming students with an introduction to the growth mindset/goal setting and returning students with a refresher around the growth mindset and the goal setting process. I believe this would be a powerful activity for two reasons. First, it would ensure that all students receive a consistent message to launch 2013-2014 mindset efforts. Second, hearing the message from the principal would communicate to both staff and students that this was an important effort and one that will be ongoing.

Daily Mindset Message (October – June)

Following the initial assembly, I recommend that the Gauger administrative team utilize a daily mindset message to reinforce messages delivered through assemblies and classroom activities. Unlike previous years, I recommend this message be delivered each day via morning announcements and that when applicable it be explicitly connected to school-wide or classroom activities (i.e. goal setting activities) that support the development of the growth mindset. At this time, I have been unable to locate a collection of such messages and instead recommend that the daily message be comprised of a growth mindset quote and be delivered as follows: “Good

Morning Gauger Cobbs, this is Mr. Shaw with today's mindset message: Next time you encounter a difficult task remember the words of (Winston Churchill): ("Success is the ability to go from one failure to another with no loss of enthusiasm"). and as always, remember that you are in control of your mind." Using this format, a daily message could be created by simply replacing the fields in parentheses, using mindset quotes, which can be located easily on the internet.

Goal-Setting Activities (Nov, Jan, & April)

In addition to assemblies and the daily message, I recommend the continued practice of engaging students in goal setting. These activities would take place following completion of the first marking period, the second marking period, and just prior to the final round of DCAS testing. Students will complete the "Goal Setting/Goal Doing" sheet, a process that emphasizes reflection around classroom performance (based on report card grades) and progress as measured by DCAS. Additionally, students will develop, with the support of their classroom teacher, steps or strategies that can be completed to help them to reach identified goals.

Classroom Mini-Activities (Ongoing)

To ensure that the focus on mindset and goal-setting is ongoing and not simply a 3 time a year occurrence, I recommend that students engage in "mini-activities" twice per month beginning in November. These activities would be designed as follow-up activities to the mindset message and would be completed following the morning announcements. Activities would be designed to be no longer than 10 minutes in length to limit the impact on instructional time.

Pilot Brainology Curriculum

For some, participation in mindset assemblies, goal setting activities, and mini-activities will be enough to cause movement towards the growth mindset. However, for others, and most likely those that have experienced repeated failure, a more direct and consistent approach may be needed. In an attempt to reach this population, I recommend that Gauger pilot the use the “Brainology” curriculum available from the Mindset Works organization. Mindset works offers the following packages to school administrators:

- Brainology Student Program
 - Designed to teach students:
 - How the brain works and how it can develop when students give effort.
 - Strategies to help students develop academically.
 - Includes lessons and activities to reinforce mindset concepts.
 - Pricing dependent upon number of licenses purchased
- Brainology Educator Kit
 - Includes:
 - Professional development activities to support teacher growth around incorporating growth mindset topics into their lessons.
 - Tools for developing their own growth mindset.
 - The cost associated with purchase of the Brainology Educator Kit is as follows:
 - \$60 per educator

- \$1500 per site
- Brainology School-Kit
 - Includes the student and educator resources identified above.
 - Pricing dependent upon size of the faculty and student body

Additional information related to program features and pricing can be found by visiting <http://www.mindsetworks.com>. For the purposes of this pilot, I recommend that Gauger purchase 1 Brainology Educator Kit and 100 student licenses for use with our 21st century afterschool program. The 21st century program targets schools which are low performing and have a high poverty population. (<http://www2.ed.gov/programs/21stcclc/index.html>). For the purposes of launching the program, organizers recruited a targeted group (approximately 80) of 6th grade students. Provided that many of these students were free/reduced lunch and scored below proficiency on the state exam they were likely to benefit from participation in the Brainology, if it is in fact a beneficial program. Additionally, use of the afterschool program will eliminate the need to dedicate valuable instructional time for the piloting purposes until benefits of the program can be better assessed. Recommended implementation time is described as a minimum of 7 ½ hours over 5-10 weeks, or best case a total of 12 hours over 6-16 weeks. Either timeline could easily fit into the first semester of the school-year, providing the opportunity for expansion of the pilot if outcomes are positive (<http://www.mindsetworks.com>).

Parent/Community Communications and Education

To ensure that Gauger families and community members are supporting school-based efforts to establish a culture of student efficacy, I recommend two actions. First, I recommend that the Gauger administrative team plan a “Growth Mindset Night” (October), during which parents are introduced to the growth/ fixed mindset and participate in sample classroom activities. Second, Gauger should develop a parent/community newsletter to further educate the community about the growth mindset and Gauger’s ongoing school-wide and classroom efforts. The newsletter would be distributed 3 times per year and would coincide with student goal setting activities so that parents could assist students in reflecting on their current progress and next steps.

Conclusion:

As principal of Gauger-Cobbs Middle School, I believe that there is merit in continuing efforts to create a culture of student efficacy. Data collected from staff and student surveys during the 2012-2013 school-year provide evidence that progress has been made over the past two years. That being said, it is a critical juncture in the initiative and the Gauger-Cobbs administrative team must accelerate efforts or risk losing the progress made over the past two years. The recommendations described above are designed to increase the frequency of school-wide communications related to the growth mindset, increase the number of mindset activities completed by students annually, explore new strategies for teaching the growth mindset, and engage parents/community members in the process. If executed, I believe these recommendations will greatly accelerate growth towards our ultimate goal.

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