

Brooklyn Bridge Academy

FINAL REPORT



New York City Department of Education External School Curriculum Audit | August 2011

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Introduction

About This Report

This final report is the result of an external school curriculum audit (ESCA) of Brooklyn Bridge Academy conducted by Learning Point Associates, an affiliate of American Institutes for Research. This audit was conducted in response to the school being identified as in need of improvement under the New York State Education Department differentiated accountability plan, pursuant to the accountability requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act. The utilized ESCA process was developed for and carried out under the auspices of the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE) Office of School Development, within the Division of Portfolio Planning.

About Brooklyn Bridge Academy

Located in Brooklyn, Brooklyn Bridge Academy (K578) is a transfer high school with 215 students. The school population comprises 87 percent Black, 10 percent Hispanic, two percent White, and one percent Asian students. The student body includes 88 percent English language learners and 10 percent special education students (Special Education Service Delivery Report¹). Boys comprise 54 percent of students, and 46 percent are girls. The average attendance rate for the 2009–10 school year is 58 percent. Eighty-eight percent of the student population is eligible for free lunch, and 10 percent of students are eligible for reduced-price lunch (Accountability and Overview Report 2009–2010²).

Brooklyn Bridge Academy is a transfer high school serving students between the ages of 16–20 who have chosen to re-engage in high school after having previously dropped out of school or become excessively truant. The focus of the school is to provide intensive support and services to students to ensure continued attendance in school. Brooklyn Bridge Academy utilizes a variety of strategies to achieve this goal, including an advisory program with teacher-advisors; employing counselors from a support organization, the Federation Employment and Guidance Service (FEGS); individualized graduation plans; tutoring programs; and a school-to-work program.

In 2009–10, Brooklyn Bridge Academy did not make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in English language arts or mathematics for Black and African-American students, and economically disadvantaged students. The school also did not meet the benchmark for graduation rates. In 2010–11, Brooklyn Bridge Academy's state accountability status was designated as "Improvement (year 1)."³ Because the school was designated as in "Need of Improvement," the school participated in the ESCA.

¹http://schools.nyc.gov/documents/teachandlearn/sesdr/2010-11/sesdr_K578.pdf. Accessed on August 18, 2011.

²<https://www.nystart.gov/publicweb-rc/2010/b8/AOR-2010-331800011578.pdf>. Accessed on August 18, 2011.

³<https://www.nystart.gov/publicweb-rc/2010/b8/AOR-2010-331800011578.pdf>. Accessed on August 18, 2011.

Audit Process at Brooklyn Bridge Academy

The ESCA approach utilized at the high school level examines six topic areas: student engagement, academic interventions and supports, support for incoming students, classroom instruction, professional development, and courses and extracurriculars. Data were collected at the school level through teacher surveys, administrator interviews, classroom observations, and an analysis of documents submitted by Brooklyn Bridge Academy, during the month of March 2011. From these data, Learning Point Associates prepared a series of reports for the school's use.

These reports were presented to the school at a co-interpretationSM meeting, on April 14, 2011. During this meeting, four stakeholders from the Brooklyn Bridge community read the reports. Through a facilitated and collaborative group process, they identified individual findings, then developed and prioritized key findings that emerged from information in the reports.

The remainder of this report presents the key findings that emerged from the co-interpretation process and the actionable recommendations that Learning Point Associates developed in response. Please note that there is not necessarily a one-to-one connection between key findings and recommendations; rather, the key findings are considered as a group, and the recommended strategies are those that we believe are most likely to have the greatest positive impact on student performance at Brooklyn Bridge Academy.

Key Findings

After considerable thought and discussion, co-interpretation participants determined a set of prioritized key findings. These key findings are detailed in this section. The wording of the key findings below matches the wording developed and agreed upon by co-interpretation participants at the meeting.

Critical Key Findings

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 1:

Based on survey and observation data, teachers are not consistently creating and implementing lessons that allow for students to work independently and foster their higher-order thinking skills.

Critical Key Finding 1 is supported by teacher surveys and classroom observations. The survey was completed by 14 out of 16 classroom teachers. Nearly all survey respondents (85.8 percent) indicated that they have a moderate or great deal of influence over establishing the curriculum and selecting instructional materials. Survey respondents identified answering textbook or worksheet questions as the most frequently used learning activity with 42.8 percent of teachers indicating students engage in such activities one to two times a week or daily. Nearly a third of survey respondents indicated that writing reflections, recording and analyzing data, and working on models and simulations occurs one to two times a week or daily.

Thirteen classroom observation cycles were conducted in English language arts, math, social studies, and science classes utilizing the Classroom Assessment Scoring System for Secondary Schools (CLASS-S) protocol. Co-interpretation participants identified the lack of consistent presence of several indicators associated with the CLASS-S as areas of concern including: content understanding, analysis and problem solving, quality feedback, and regard for adolescent perspective. With regards to *content understanding*, there was some evidence of content connected to broad concepts and themes; however, more often observed classes focused on discrete bits of information, with students expected to recall facts and locate information. Participants noted this was of particular concern in English language arts classes, “which [are] designed to teach understanding of overarching concepts.” Evidence of the indicator *analysis and problem-solving*, such as opportunities for higher-level thinking—including analysis, student self-evaluation, and planning—were present but not consistent or sustained in most classes observed. These practices were absent or fleeting in nearly one-quarter of the classes observed. Co-interpretation participants cited the lack of consistent opportunities for students to demonstrate understanding through the application of knowledge. In addition, few opportunities for student autonomy and leadership were observed. While teachers did make attempts to connect material to students’ lives and encourage participation in discussions, opportunities for meaningful choice and leadership were generally lacking. Finally, while two observations in mathematics classrooms exemplified consistent and ongoing high-quality feedback, this was not the case for all classrooms. Students were often asked to explain right answers; however, students were rarely probed to discuss their thinking on incorrect answers, as a means to understand student thought process.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 2:

Based on surveys and interviews, some staff are not clear on how to access and utilize data and databases to best address student needs.

Critical Key Finding 2 is supported by teacher surveys, interviews, and documents provided by the school. Data from teacher surveys indicated that teachers have limited access to data, in general, with nearly a third (28.6 percent) to over half (57.2 percent) of respondents reporting minimal to no access to data regarding: number of course failures, number of credits completed, tardiness, and grade point average. Brooklyn Bridge Academy organizes curriculum and assessments into two-week increments called *bars*. Student progress is monitored and interviewees indicated that struggling students are identified by the second bar, approximately four weeks into a trimester. However, survey data indicates that teachers are divided about the likelihood of the school systematically identifying effective supports that the students need, and providing those supports in a timely manner for as long as students need them. Interviewees suggested the process for identifying struggling students could be more formal, although others indicated that students of concern are closely monitored. Discussion amongst co-interpretation participants suggested that not all staff may be aware of what specific interventions are made available to students.

Finally, concerns about the availability and effective use of individualized education programs (IEPs) were noted by co-interpretation participants. Survey respondents were divided as to the frequency they receive support in interpreting IEPs and designing instruction. Just over a third (35.7 percent) of respondents indicated they never or almost never receive such support, while 28.5 percent reported receiving this support one to two times a week or daily. Despite this, about half of the respondents report that they refer to IEPs to plan instruction at least once a trimester and between 58.3 percent and 83.3 percent of teachers report differentiating content, process, and product one to two times a week or daily for students with disabilities.

CRITICAL KEY FINDING 3:

Although there was a documented presence of high engagement and autonomy of learning by students, it was inconsistent across classrooms.

Critical Key Finding 3 is supported by information from classroom observations conducted using the CLASS-S. One dimension of the protocol focuses on student engagement, which captures the degree to which all students in the class are focused on and participating in the learning activity. Observation data indicated that levels of high engagement were not consistent throughout the school and across content areas. Another dimension of the protocol, regard for adolescent perspectives, focuses on the extent to which student ideas and opinions are valued and content is made useful and relevant to adolescents. This dimension also includes opportunities for student leadership and autonomy. Observation data from this dimension indicated that most classes lacked opportunities for student independence and were teacher directed throughout.

Positive Key Findings

POSITIVE KEY FINDING 1:

Data from interviews, document review, and classroom observations suggest that Brooklyn Bridge Academy offers a generally supportive environment for students.

Positive Key Finding 1 is supported by information from teacher surveys, interviews, and document review. This key finding cited interviews and information gathered from documents and noted that “students are provided with a structured advisory program in conjunction with FEGS, which offers ongoing support for students’ emotional and academic needs. Teachers and FEGS advisors work collaboratively through this model to support students.” Observation data indicated that the school has a supportive environment for students with the majority of classrooms exhibiting some evidence of positive climate such as warm, calm voices and teachers expressing interest in student’s lives beyond school, and shared smiles between teachers and students. There were few classroom disrupters evident across the observations.

POSITIVE KEY FINDING 2:

According to interview data and document reviews, the school is providing opportunities for students to explore personal interests around academics through newly developed course electives and work experience through extensive afterschool internships.

Data from interviews and documents indicate that the school has a Learning to Work program, which places 100 students in afterschool work internships. Brooklyn Bridge Academy also partners with other organizations to offer afterschool programs around life skills and to provide mentoring. According to interview respondents, elective courses offered include: governmental debates, pre-calculus, writing for publication, genetics and forensics, health and nutrition, transformational geometry, poetry, British literature, genetics, physics and life, child abuse and child health advocacy, Spanish, and art.

POSITIVE KEY FINDING 3:

Based on surveys and interviews, the teaching staff is able to identify the needs and determine the skill levels of their students; however, some are struggling to provide the academic supports needed by students.

Positive Key Finding 3 is primarily supported by information from the teacher survey and interviews. According to interview data, course performance is monitored in two-week academic intervals called *bars*; by bars two and three, school staff members are aware of which students are struggling. However, survey data indicate that teachers are divided about the likelihood of the school systematically identifying effective supports that the students need, and providing those supports in a timely manner for as long as students need them. Discussion amongst co-interpretation participants suggested that not all staff members may be aware of the supports and interventions that students are assigned to and participate in. This key finding was identified as a positive finding even though it was noted that some teachers continue to struggle to provide academic supports to struggling students.

Recommendations

Overview of Recommendations

The staff at Brooklyn Bridge Academy recognize their unique mission of re-engaging students who have been marginalized, disenfranchised, and who are struggling to progress toward graduation. In the past school year, the school community has initiated a number of supports aimed at bolstering the foundational academic skills of students. The school also utilizes several strategies to foster and maintain student engagement, including closely monitoring attendance, an advisory program designed to build strong relationships between staff and students, and a school-to-work program that provides opportunities to connect classroom learning with the world of work and assist students in the transition out of high school. Community-based organizations play a key role in supporting these strategies. Still, the data highlighted during co-interpretation point to a need for greater consistency in and across classrooms with regard to accessing and using data, student engagement, and rigorous instruction. Documents indicate that in the 2010–11 school year, the school selected scaffolding and questioning as instructional strategies for improvement. Yet, these practices were not consistently evident across the observed classrooms.

THE FOUR RECOMMENDATIONS

With these issues in mind, Learning Point Associates auditors developed the following four recommendations:

1. Continue to identify and implement instructional strategies that increase opportunities for higher-order thinking, analysis and problem solving, and deeper content understanding.
2. Provide clear expectations and support for the schoolwide use of student achievement data for planning and delivering instruction.
3. Continue to implement and refine a schoolwide initiative aimed at increasing student engagement and creating a sustainable and supportive learning environment. The aim is to improve participation, reduce boredom, and increase student achievement in academic and social skills.
4. Develop and implement specific strategies for incorporating appropriate student voice, choice, and opportunities for autonomy and leadership in the classroom

These four recommendations are discussed on the following pages. Each recommendation provides a review of research, specific actions the school may wish to take during its implementation process, examples of real-life schools that have successfully implemented strategies, and online resources for additional information. All works cited, as well as suggestions for further reading, appear in the References section at the end of this report.

Please note that the order in which these recommendations are presented does not reflect a ranking or prioritization of the recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Instructional Rigor

Continue to identify and implement instructional strategies that increase opportunities for higher-order thinking, analysis and problem solving, and deeper content understanding.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Instruction that pushes students to engage in higher-level thinking leads to deeper learning for students (Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock, 2001; Newmann, Bryk, & Nagaoka, 2001; Pashler et al., 2007). Too often, particularly in schools where students are struggling, instruction focuses on lower-level thinking skills, basic content, and test preparation. Teachers of struggling student groups or tracks usually offer students “less exciting instruction, less emphasis on meaning and conceptualization, and more rote drill and practice activities” than do teachers of high-performing or heterogeneous groups and classes (Cotton, 1989, p. 8). Yet this focus on basic skills does not necessarily improve student achievement.

Several research studies were completed from 1990 to 2003 “which demonstrated that students who experienced higher levels of authentic instruction and assessment showed higher achievement than students who experienced lower levels of authentic instruction and assessment” (Newmann, King, & Carmichael, 2007, p. vii). These results included higher achievement on standardized tests (Newmann et al., 2001). It is also important to note that these results “were consistent for Grades 3–12, across different subject areas (mathematics, social studies, language arts, science), and for different students regardless of race, gender, or socioeconomic status” (Newmann et al., 2007, p. vii).

Teachers need to provide structured opportunities and time for students to take on higher-level cognitive work (Tomlinson, 2003). In discussing the *gradual release of responsibility model*, Fisher and Frey (2008) state that “the cognitive load should shift slowly and purposefully from teacher-as-model, to joint responsibility, to independent practice and application by the learner” (p. 2). This process allows students to become what Graves and Fitzgerald (2003) call “competent, independent learners” (p. 98).

There are several steps to ensure that students are being asked to complete this type of intellectually challenging work, which increases test scores and improves performance on authentic assessment measures as well. Newmann et al. (2001) define *authentically challenging intellectual work* as the “construction of knowledge, through the use of disciplined inquiry, to produce discourse, products, or performances that have value beyond school” (p. 14).

Daggett (2005) agrees, stating that all students should be pushed “to achieve academic excellence, which ultimately boils down to applying rigorous knowledge to unpredictable, real-world situations, such as those that drive our rapidly changing world” (p. 5). Disciplined inquiry, which occurs in the classroom, requires that students “(1) use a prior knowledge base; (2) strive for in-depth understanding rather than superficial awareness; and (3) express their ideas and findings with elaborated communication” (Newmann et al., 2001, p. 15).

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Doing What Works: Providing
Research-Based Education
Practices Online (Website)

<http://dww.ed.gov/>

*Organizing Instruction and
Study to Improve Learning*
(Publication)

[http://ies.ed.gov/
ncee/wwc/pdf/
practiceguides/20072004.
pdf](http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/20072004.pdf)

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

1. Cultivate schoolwide high expectations for students.

- Align instruction with the New York State P–12 Common Core Learning Standards. According to NYCDOE (2011b), schools in New York City are set to have fully adopted the P–12 Common Core Learning Standards for students to take aligned assessments during the 2014–15 school year. These standards are internationally benchmarked and rigorous; they clearly explain what students at each grade level are expected to know and be able to do. Some schools were involved in pilot programs in 2010–11.
- Develop a shared understanding of instructional rigor through collaborative curriculum planning, design, and/or redesign. When developing or revising curriculum maps, identify opportunities for formative assessment tasks that encourage higher-level thinking for each unit of study.
- Through teacher collaboration, develop common student assignments that ask students to perform rigorous and authentic tasks.
- Through teacher collaboration, develop common student assessments that include rigorous and authentic summative assessment tasks.
- Monitor implementation of expectations through classroom observations, lesson plan review, and student achievement results on common formative assessments.

2. Provide professional development for teachers on instructional strategies that push students to engage in higher-order thinking.

- Provide ongoing professional development for teachers that describes the importance of pushing students to do higher-level thinking and provides strategies for how to do so. This training may be provided through ongoing professional development sessions and/or support of an instructional coach.
- Create clear expectations regarding how teachers should implement this professional development in the classroom (e.g., one strategy utilized each day as reflected in lesson plans, authentic assessments at the end of each unit).
- Identify how this professional development can be incorporated into scheduled teacher collaboration sessions.
- Monitor implementation of professional development through classroom observations, lesson plan review, and student achievement results on common formative assessments.

3. Develop examples of authentic intellectual work.

The following example can be used to help school leaders and teachers understand what authentic intellectual work might look like.

Examples of High-Scoring and Low-Scoring Measures of Authentic Intellectual Work

The research report *Improving Chicago's Schools: Authentic Intellectual Work and Standardized Tests: Conflict or Coexistence?* by Newmann, Bryk, and Nagaoka (2001) provides examples of two sixth-grade writing assignments: one that scored high and one that scored low on measures of authentic intellectual work. The authors conclude each example with a commentary of why the assignment received the score that it did.

High Scoring Writing Assignment

Write a paper persuading someone to do something. Pick any topic that you feel strongly about, convince the reader to agree with your belief, and convince the reader to take a specific action on this belief.

Commentary

In this high scoring assignment, demands for construction of knowledge are evident because students have to select information and organize it into convincing arguments. By asking students to convince others to believe and act in a certain way, the task entails strong demands that the students support their views with reasons or other evidence, which calls for elaborated written communication. Finally, the intellectual challenge is connected to students' lives because they are to write on something they consider to be personally important.

Low Scoring Writing Assignment

Identify the parts of speech of each underlined word below. All eight parts of speech—nouns, pronouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, and interjections—are included in this exercise.

1. My room is arranged for comfort and efficiency.
2. As you enter, you will find a wooden table on the left.
3. I write and type.
4. There is a book shelf near the table.
5. On this book shelf, I keep both my pencils and paper supplies.
6. I spend many hours in this room.
7. I often read or write there during the evening...

Commentary

This assignment requires no construction of knowledge or elaborated communication, and does not pose a question or problem clearly connected to students' lives. Instead it asks students to recall one-word responses, based on memorization or definitions of parts of speech.

Reprinted from page 24 of *Improving Chicago's Schools: Authentic Intellectual Work and Standardized Tests: Conflict or Coexistence?* by Fred M. Newmann, Anthony S. Bryk, and Jenny K. Nagaoka, available online at <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/p0a02.pdf>. Copyright © 2001 Consortium on Chicago School Research. Reprinted with permission.

Further examples of authentic intellectual instruction, teachers' assignments, and student work can be found in the following source:

Newmann, F. M., King, M. B., & Carmichael, D. L. (2007). *Authentic instruction and assessment: Common standards for rigor and relevance in teaching academic subjects*. Des Moines, IA: Iowa Department of Education. Retrieved June 24, 2011, from <http://centerforaiw.com/sites/centerforaiw.com/files/Authentic-Instruction-Assessment-BlueBook.pdf>

Perrysburg High School

Perrysburg High School in Perrysburg, Ohio serves students in Grades 9–12. Perrysburg is a suburb of Toledo, OH.

“Perrysburg is the sole high school in the Perrysburg Exempted Village District in Wood County. Nate Ash teaches physics to eleventh and twelfth graders. Ash has taught professional development programs at the Northwest Ohio Center of Excellence in Science and Mathematics Education, and at Bowling Green State University in Ohio. He acts as a mentor to new science teachers.

Ash teaches physics using an inquiry approach. Students do lab activities and solve problems together to understand key concepts in physics. In each lesson he poses higher- order questions to help his students build explanations: How do you know that? What would happen if we changed this variable? How is this similar or different? Ash uses whiteboards in a number of ways: for group problem solving, representing a phenomenon with pictures, and student presentations.

Each new unit/topic is introduced with a hands-on activity. Ash presents a physical situation to students, has them manipulate the variables, and then narrows down their list of variables to design an experiment. Every experiment is introduced with an open-ended question (What would happen if...? What happens when...?). Students work in small groups to describe what happens with graphs, pictures, mathematical equations, and written expression. When they are finished, students present their work to the class in “whiteboard sessions.”

Ash explains how the whiteboard sessions give important insights into student thinking: “We can really see if the students understand on every different level how that problem works or how that situation works. And if there is a disjoint between any of those representations, that gives us someplace to go, that gives us something to talk about, something to work through.”

Students appreciate being in charge of their own learning, having the opportunity to challenge their peers, and develop critical thinking skills as they explain their ideas in front of a group. As Ash says, “Students really like this approach because, instead of just giving them the answer, it gives them a chance to explain to each other what’s going on. And I like it because all the times that I have done physics problems on the board and gone through the answers, I got pretty good at doing physics problems but my students never got any better at all.”

Ash has found that with this approach his students are no longer trying to find equations that fit the problems, but working to develop a deep understanding of the underlying concepts.

(Description from Doing What Works website: http://dww.ed.gov/media/CL/OIS/TopicLevel/case_perrysburg_52708rev.pdf)

Recommendation 2: Systematic Use of Data to Inform Instruction

Provide clear expectations and support for the schoolwide use of student achievement data for planning and delivering instruction.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Student assessment data is an essential tool in measuring the effectiveness of instruction; teachers can use these data to ensure the success of all students.

The Institute of Education Sciences (IES) Practice Guide *Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making* (Hamilton et al., 2009) includes the following school-level recommendations regarding data use to improve instruction:

- “Establish a clear vision for schoolwide data use.”
- “Provide supports that foster a data-driven culture within the school.”
- “Make data part of an ongoing cycle of instructional improvement.” (p. 9)

Clear Vision for Schoolwide Data Use. Learning Point Associates and Educational Service Agency Alliance of the Midwest (2006) emphasize the need to do the following:

Make sure all staff members understand what their core responsibilities are and what their obligations are for learning to do that work better. Understanding this will make a big difference in how staff will seek, manipulate, present, and use data. (p. 21)

The principal and school leaders also should set the example of using data regularly. A study of the effects of leadership practices on student achievement by Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003) shows “the extent to which the principal monitors the effectiveness of school practices and their impact on student achievement” to be one of the 21 leadership responsibilities significantly associated with student achievement (p. 12). Cotton (1988) agrees, “The careful monitoring of student progress is shown in the literature to be one of the major factors differentiating effective schools and teachers from ineffective ones” (p. 1).

Supports That Foster a Data-Driven Culture Within the School. Cultivating a culture of reflection and continuous improvement will help teachers feel comfortable using data. Young’s (2008) case studies identify “four dimensions of trust” that suggest how culture may or may not support teachers using the data system. To the degree that teachers think in terms of these four dimensions, they will be more likely to utilize a data system:

- “Other teachers have high standards.”
- “Other teachers won’t think I’m incompetent.”
- “Others will participate/reciprocate in response to my engagement.”
- “Problems I raise will be seen as collective problems.” (p. 99)

Time also is an important factor in professional support. Teacher respondents cited in a U.S. Department of Education report on data use most often cited “lack of time to examine and

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Children First Intensive
(Website)

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/resources/childrenfirst/default.htm>

Doing What Works: Providing
Research-Based Education
Practices Online (Website)

<http://dww.ed.gov/>

Using Student Achievement
Data to Support
Instructional Decision
Making (Publication)

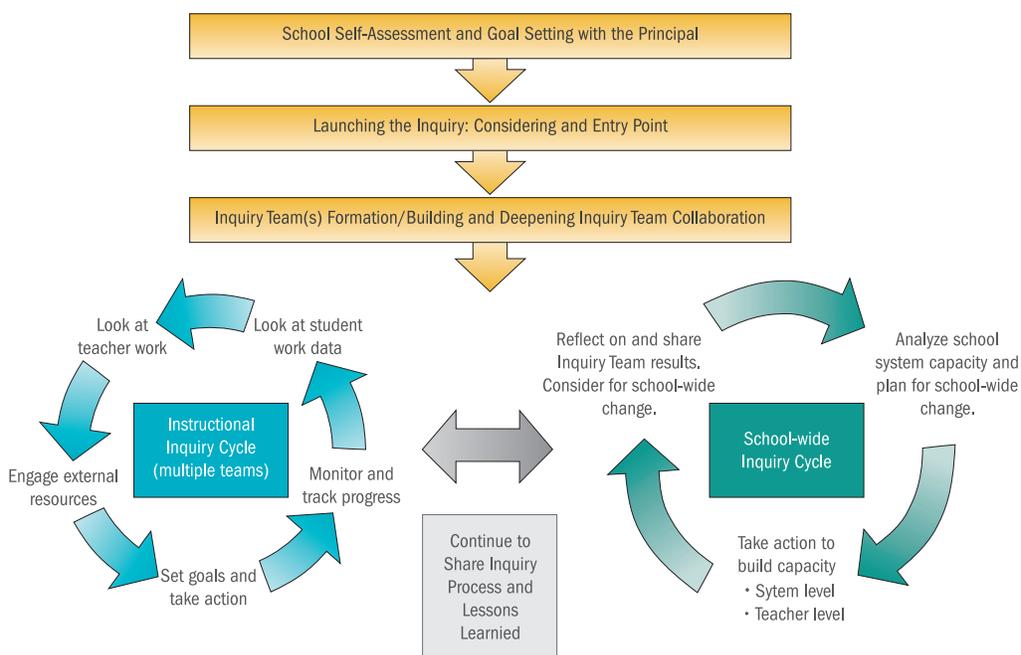
http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/pdf/practiceguides/dddm_pg_092909.pdf

reflect on data [as] the greatest barrier to data-driven decision making” (Means, Padilla, & Gallagher, 2010, p. 87).

Finally, “teachers need to learn how to obtain and manage data, ask good questions, accurately analyze data, and apply data results appropriately and ethically” (Lachat & Smith, 2005, p. 336). Through professional development and coaching, the school can support teachers in meeting these goals.

Data as Part of an Ongoing Cycle of Instructional Improvement. The NYCDOE Children First Intensive professional development plan established school-level inquiry teams at each school to support student achievement. NYCDOE uses the following graphic (see Figure 1) to illustrate the ongoing process of collaborative inquiry.

Figure 1. Collaborative Inquiry Process



Source: New York City Department of Education (2011a)

NYCDOE (2011a) defines *collaborative inquiry* as “a sustained process of investigation and action by a group of educators that empowers teachers to improve student achievement and close the achievement gap. Collaborative inquiry can look very different in different contexts, but there are some common threads across all teams, mainly that teachers evaluate the effectiveness of their collective work through the lens of student work and data.”

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Co-interpretation participants noted inconsistent use and understanding of how to utilize IEPs to serve students. When considering this recommendation and next steps, the school is encouraged to consider how this data source should inform instruction and how teachers can be supported in the implementation of strategies for struggling students as well as students with disabilities.

- 1. Create a school culture of reflection and continuous improvement.** School leaders play an important role in creating a school culture of reflection and continuous improvement.
 - Assign teachers to grade-level and/or subject-specific collaborative inquiry teams, if they do not already exist, to analyze schoolwide data and grade-level/subject-specific data.
 - Identify how the work of collaborative inquiry teams will align with the schoolwide goals developed as part of the collaborative inquiry cycle, and as required for the Comprehensive Education Plan.
 - Set aside time for collaborative data analysis. This analysis can take place during existing teacher collaboration time or could be done through inquiry teams.
 - Develop a standard data analysis protocol and schedule.
 - Provide resources to support teacher collaboration on data analysis, such as tracking sheets and/or a data coach.
- 2. Set clear expectations for data use.** Establish clear expectations regarding teacher use of data.
 - Establish a yearly, schoolwide schedule for assessments and screening procedures (e.g., three times each year).
 - Identify assessment instrument(s) that will be used to track student achievement. Screening instruments should be valid, reliable, and aligned with grade-level curriculum based on learning standards (e.g., state assessments, Acuity predictive assessments, or instructionally targeted assessments) or subject-specific and researched-based assessments (e.g., Woodcock-Johnson III Diagnostic Reading Battery, Qualitative Reading Inventory).
 - Ensure that assessment results are shared with teachers in a timely way and that teachers have access to assessment results, if assessment results are not readily available on the Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS).
 - Describe how the school, teams, and individual teachers will be expected to use data (e.g., set goals, align resources, modify scope and sequence, identify students for tutoring, target students in lesson plans).
 - Provide professional development as needed on topics such as data analysis, item analysis, and instructional strategies.
- 3. Provide training on instructional strategies and differentiation.** “Just having student data is not sufficient if teachers do not have ideas about how to teach differently based on student performance” (Means et al., 2010, p. 87).

- Provide professional development on instructional strategies and differentiation to give teachers a wealth of instructional options that they can call on to meet student needs.
- Adjust classroom instruction based on student progress. The IES Practice Guide *Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making* (Hamilton et al., 2009) identifies the following changes to instruction that teachers can make to improve student achievement:
 - “Prioritizing instructional time;
 - Targeting additional individual instruction for students who are struggling with particular topics;
 - More easily identifying individual students’ strengths and instructional interventions that can help students continue to progress;
 - Gauging the instructional effectiveness of classroom lessons;
 - Refining instructional methods; and
 - Examining schoolwide data to consider whether and how to adapt the curriculum based on information about students’ strengths and weaknesses.” (p. 5)

4. Monitor Progress. Track implementation of schoolwide data use policies to ensure that they are being implemented consistently and to provide teachers with continuous feedback and appropriate support.

- Establish a system of multiple methods for ensuring that teacher teams have what they need to engage in regular data analysis to inform instruction. This system could include inquiry team data logs, teacher reflection sheets on instructional strategies, and/or reports from the data coach.
- Consider implementing classroom walk-throughs by administrators, a lead teacher, or the data coach to see how data analysis and professional development are impacting classroom practice and to identify the best ways to support teachers moving forward. The intention of this process is formative teacher feedback to improve instruction—not to penalize teachers; thus, the school may wish to work collaboratively with its instructional staff to develop a related classroom walk-through protocol. By building in feedback loops, the school can ensure that effective decisions are being made, based on data. As Learning Point Associates and the Educational Service Agency Alliance of the Midwest (2006) state:

Data make change visible. Data provide an empirical lens that magnifies objective detail while distancing us from personality. Data can confirm if there is change or not. The smaller, the tighter, the more frequent the feedback loops that the data system supports, the more staff can make decisions, the more frequently decisions can be made, and the more likely that the decisions made will be better ones. (p. 5)

MacArthur Ninth Grade School

MacArthur Ninth Grade School serves 9–12 grade students. Located in suburban Houston, Texas, 79 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

The school administers three-week and six-week assessments to regularly check students' mastery of the objectives. Teachers analyze these data for trends and provide tutorial sessions to individual students to ensure they can demonstrate mastery. Students also monitor their own data and set learning goals after each six-week benchmark assessment.

For the three-week assessments, teachers develop a test that typically includes 12–15 multiple-choice questions based on district benchmark assessments. The results help teachers plan instruction and provide interim feedback to students.

The six-week assessments are the districtwide benchmark tests that contain 15 questions.

Teachers typically add additional items to ensure a minimum of four questions about each objective. After assessments are scanned and scored, teachers return the results to the students.

The students count their errors per objective, determine and record their percentages, and set personal goals for the next assessments.

To analyze these results, teachers enter them in a spreadsheet that was created by the testing coordinator. To determine whether the results of an individual teacher align with the average in the department, teachers meet by department and compare the passing percent of each class with the average in the department. Then teachers reflect on the results to determine (a) areas of instruction that need to be strengthened and (b) specific objectives that should be re-taught for a whole class period or revisited through daily warm-up activities.

The district has established a 70 percent mastery goal for the six-week benchmark assessments.

Students who do not meet this goal participate in after-school tutorial sessions. Each core subject has one day after school set aside for these sessions. Students receiving this additional support are retested until they achieve the benchmark goal.

(Description from the Doing What Works website: http://dww.ed.gov/media/DDI/DDDM/TopicLevel/case_macarthur_revised.pdf)

Recommendation 3: Student Engagement

Continue to implement and refine a schoolwide initiative aimed at increasing student engagement and creating a sustainable and supportive learning environment. The aim is to improve student attendance, enhance participation, reduce boredom, end negative behaviors and the associated classroom management issues, and increase student achievement in academic and social skills.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Student engagement provides an essential foundation for increasing achievement levels. “Educators must work to build engagement levels if they hope to support students in meeting higher standards” (Learning Point Associates, 2005, p. 2).

In a report on the 2009 High School Survey of Student Engagement (HSSSE), which was taken by 42,754 students, Yazzie-Mintz (2010, pp. 2–3) describes a spectrum of student disengagement—from temporary boredom to dropping out—and attributes this disengagement to the following: uninteresting and irrelevant material, work being too challenging or not challenging enough, no interaction with the teacher, not liking the school or the teacher, not seeing value in the assigned work, adults at the school not caring about the student, safety and bullying concerns, schoolwork not connecting to real world or real work, feeling little connection with any adult at the school, teacher favoritism, ineffective instruction or instructional methods, feeling unheard and not responded to or respected, and feelings of frustration and disconnection.

When students feel marginalized or alienated at school, they lose interest and become disengaged. Yazzie-Mintz (2010, p. 17) concludes that there are considerable gaps not only in academic achievement but also in student engagement and suggests the integration of engagement data with academic data as a useful tool for school planning and decision making.

Factors that would increase student engagement, according to the surveyed students (Yazzie-Mintz, pp. 18–23) are as follows: supportive and nurturing schools; increased individualization; classes that are more fun as well as interactive, experiential, and relevant; a schoolwide belief in relationships, respect, and responsibility; coaching and modeling for the staff of good student engagement practices; reflection on and response to student ideas; adult understanding of student skills, strengths, and interests and having these qualities inform instruction; experiential learning and interdisciplinary studies; and opportunities for students to work together on finding solutions to real-world problems and issues.

Students need to build a sense of self-efficacy (Alvermann, 2003) in an inclusive environment in which they can achieve competence. They should be engaged in authentic and personally meaningful work, using a culturally relevant curriculum with an appropriate level of difficulty and challenge—one that requires problem solving (Voke, 2002). In addition, Gordon (2006) suggests the recognition and leveraging of individual student strengths and recalls a typical student response from the 2005 Gallup Youth Survey (pp. 77–80):

“My teacher understood the way that I learned and worked. I was never criticized for my ideas or feelings, but I was met with questions and ideas that could change the way I looked at something.” —Jessica, 17, Waverly, IA (p. 77)

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Center for Mental Health in Schools (Website)

<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (Website)

<http://www.casel.org>

Illinois Learning Standards for Social/Emotional Learning (Website)

http://isbe.state.il.us/ils/social_emotional/standards.htm

Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility (Website)

<http://www.morningsidecenter.org>

A rubric titled the “Partnership Guide for Culturally Responsive Teaching” (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2000, pp. 185–187) offers a list of engagement activities (establishing inclusion, developing a positive attitude, enhancing meaning and engendering competence) and assessment tools. The Executive Summary of *Engaging Schools* (National Academy of Sciences, 2003) provides 10 recommendations for reaching “the goals of meaningful engagement and genuine improvements in achievement” for high school students (pp. 4–9). Easton (2008) discusses engaging struggling high school students by using experiential learning, essential questions and a whole-child perspective in curriculum development, instructional strategies, professional development, and teacher evaluations. “If there is a secret to motivation in the classroom,” says Gordon (2006, p. 80), “it lies in the interaction between the teacher and the student.”

“There is a growing consensus that whatever else is done, schools must also become places where it is easier for students and teachers to know one another well and for students to connect to the school and its purposes, says Sergiovanni (2000, p. 58). “Schools in other words must be caring and learning communities.”

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS: WHOLE-SCHOOL PRACTICES

Incorporating student engagement practices should be part of the annual school improvement process. Whole-school practices such as building a safe and supportive school environment are part of this process. Students can learn effectively only in environments in which they feel safe and supported and where their teachers have high expectations for their learning. Implementation of a schoolwide positive behavior plan that is based on pro-social values, social competencies, incentives, and positive peer relationships will lay the foundation for classroom-level work and must occur before the classroom work can begin.

The following guidelines were developed by the Victoria Department of Education and Early Child Development (2009) for implementation of effective student engagement strategies across whole schools at the building level:

1. Create a positive school culture.

Teachers and staff must recognize students as individuals by acknowledging and celebrating the diversity of the student population. The school must find ways to connect students to school (through clubs, sports, student council, and other activities) so they develop a sense of belonging. The school should provide transition programs and practices at different stages of schooling that will minimize anxiety, increase resilience, and ensure that students develop a readiness to enter their new environment and make successful transitions between year levels.

2. Encourage student participation.

Giving students a voice is not simply about the opportunity to communicate ideas and opinions; it also is about having the power to influence change. Incorporating meaningful involvement of students means validating and authorizing them to represent their own ideas, opinions, knowledge and experiences throughout education to improve the school.

3. Proactively engage with parents/caretakers.

Keys to successful partnerships with parents/caretakers and families include strong two-way communication, volunteer opportunities, curricula-related collaborations, shared decision making, community-based partnerships, and efficacy building.

4. Implement preventative and early interventions.

The school needs to determine how it will intervene when students exhibit disengaged behaviors—specifically poor attendance and anti-social behaviors. Prevention strategies should target the whole school and should be designed to reduce any risk factors that may contribute to attendance or behavioral issues.

5. Respond to individual students.

The school should have a process in place to identify and respond to individual students who require additional assistance and support. It is imperative to coordinate early intervention and prevention strategies that utilize internal as well as external support services in order to identify and address the barriers to learning that individual students may be facing.

Schools also can implement major changes to their structures that can make it easier to develop positive learning relationships, including small learning communities, alternative scheduling, team teaching, teaching continuity, school-based enterprises, and professional learning communities.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS: CLASSROOM PRACTICES

Keeping students focused and engaged in the classroom is quite a challenge amid the entire complex changes—physical, intellectual, emotional, and social—that they experience during this phase of their lives.

1. Relate lessons to students' lives.

A relevant curriculum relates content to the daily lives, concerns, experiences, and pertinent social issues of the learners. Teachers can gain insight into student concerns by taking periodic interest inventories, through informal conversations, and from classroom dialogue (Learning Point Associates, 2005). These issues and topics then can be incorporated into units, lesson plans, and further classroom discussions.

2. Make the learning authentic.

Newmann et al. (1995) advocate for authentic instructional practices to engage learners and offer three criteria for authentic instructional practices: construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry, and value beyond the school.

The first criterion for authentic instructional practices is to facilitate the construction of knowledge by acknowledging students' existing understanding and experience. Identifying students' preconceptions and initial understanding is critical to the learning process. "If students' preconceptions are not addressed directly, they often memorize

content (e.g., formulas in physics), yet still use their experience-based preconceptions to act in the world” (Donovan & Bransford, 2005, p. 5).

The second criterion for authentic instructional practices is to facilitate disciplined inquiry through structured activities; the inquiry process is critical to the construction of knowledge (Marzano, 2003; Newmann et al., 1995). This process consists of building on the learner’s prior knowledge to develop a deeper understanding, integrating new information, and using the knowledge in new ways.

The third criterion for authentic instructional practices is value beyond school (Newmann et al., 1995). This criterion may entail connecting content to personal or public issues as well as the demonstration of understanding to an audience beyond the school. Examples of such activities include writing persuasive letters to the city council to advocate for a skate park, interviewing community elders for an oral history project, or communicating the impact of a development project using scientific concepts.

3. Give students choices.

Finally, providing choice in middle-level classrooms will engage learners. Providing opportunities for students to select a topic or text acknowledges young adolescents’ need to exercise more decision-making power. Giving students ownership in their learning process increases motivation and keeps interest levels high. Students who have a strong interest in a specific subject may wish to pursue an independent project. These projects may be used as a differentiated way to explore the curriculum. (See “Regard for Adolescent Perspectives in the Classroom.”)

Regard for Adolescent Perspectives in the Classroom

Following are some suggestions for showing regard for adolescent perspectives. These ideas are based on the work of Smutny, Walker, and Meckstroth (1997) and Tomlinson (1999).

- Independent projects will extend learning beyond the curriculum in the textbook and develop enthusiasm, commitment, and academic skills in addition to allowing students to develop deeper relationships with subject matter.
- “Brainstorming with...children on what kinds of projects they could do may also generate ideas teachers may never have thought of on their own” (Smutny, 2000, p. 7).
- Surveying students’ interests in the beginning of the school year will give teachers direction in planning activities that will ‘get students on board’ from the start.
- Surveying again at key points during the year will inform teachers of new interests that develop as their students grow.
- Interest centers are designed to motivate students’ exploration of topics in which they have a particular interest. They are usually comprised of objects that students can explore, such as shells, leaves, maps, or projects, and are centered around broad topics. Students can choose from the menu and note their choices accordingly. Teachers decide how many items on the menu (minimum) that each student is required to complete. This is adjusted to meet instructional needs on an individual basis.

Examples of Student Engagement

The National Center for School Engagement (2007) compiled the following examples of student engagement best practices from school districts across the United States:

Factor in Math Fun: *In Oswego, New York, a Factoring Fan Club was created for 9th grade math students to get them excited about factoring, to keep it fresh in their minds, and to be “good” at factoring.* Source: Oswego School District, Oswego, NY

Celebrate Pi Day on 3/14: *This event was created to help students enjoy math by offering a fun-filled day honoring pi. Events included a pie eating contest, measuring the diameter and circumference of round objects to calculate pi, and other games related to circles.* Source: Independence School District, Independence, VA

Mobilize Community: *Community Now! is an asset-based community development tool of the Connection Institute. It uses asset-based language and planning to bring the community together to discover what values the community shares as a whole. It then works to mobilize community members around its assets and shares values to become proactive in its planning rather than reactive.* Source: Kittery Children’s Leadership Council, Kittery, ME

Collaborate with Higher Education: *In Mesquite, Texas, a local college delivers 3.5 hours of continuing education courses (“Educational Opportunities”) to truant students and their families. The curriculum includes the negative consequences associated with poor school attendance and the positive consequences associated with scholastic achievement. Discussion of transition from high school to college is discussed and a tour of the college is provided.* Source: Dallas Independent School District, TX

Offer Incentives: *As a reward, a lunch-time soccer game is organized for students with good attendance by school staff.* Source: Summit School District, Frisco, CO

Support Positive Behavior: *Jacksonville School District adapted the principles of Got Fish? (a book to build business morale) for the classroom. Principles include: being there, play, choosing your behavior, and make their day. Students are recognized when observed “living” each of the principles.* Source: Jacksonville School District, Jacksonville, FL

Create Student-Generated Classroom Rules: *In Eugene, Oregon, students create a list of classroom rules to be followed. Each student signs off on the rules and is held accountable by fellow students. In addition, they developed their own “honor roll”, in which students are recognized for doing their best, following directions, and not talking out more than 3 times a day.* Source: Linn Benton Lincoln Education Service District, Eugene, OR

Facilitate Positive Student-Teacher Connections: *Some schools in Oregon encourage students to sign up for a one-on-one lunch with their teacher during school time. The teacher uses this time to get to know the student and offers them encouragement and praise. Children and youth benefit when their teachers demonstrate that they care about student well-being in addition to academic success.* Source: Linn Benton Lincoln Education Service District, Eugene, OR

Reprinted from *21 Ways to Engage Students in School*, available online at <http://www.schoolengagement.org/TruancyPreventionRegistry/Admin/Resources/Resources/21WaystoEngageStudentsinSchool.pdf>. Copyright © 2007 National Center for School Engagement. Reprinted with permission.

Recommendation 4: Student Voice, Choice, Autonomy and Leadership

Develop and implement specific strategies for incorporating appropriate student voice, choice, and opportunities for autonomy and leadership in the classroom.

LINK TO RESEARCH

Empirical research has demonstrated that supporting student choice, autonomy, and leadership in the classroom can train students to regulate their own learning and deepen their cognitive process to improve academic achievement. Efforts to foster supportive autonomy consist of establishing a link between a student's classroom behavior and the resources that motivate the student to succeed, such as personal interests, goals, and values (Reeve, 2010). This approach inherently involves students in their own learning process by creating a direct link between their personal motivations and classroom activities.

Autonomy-supportive instructional strategies have been shown to improve student engagement, conceptual understanding, academic achievement, and persistence in the classroom (Young, 2005). The goal of these strategies is to encourage students to engage in self-regulated learning, which involves students interpreting learning tasks, determining goals, and implementing strategies to meet goals (Young, 2005). Creating an autonomy-supportive classroom environment requires teachers to incorporate students' preferences, choices, curiosity, and challenges into lessons (Reeve, Jang, Carrell, Barch, & Jeon, 2004). Additional approaches include allocating time in a way that allows students to work in their own way, scaffolding student learning, engaging in feedback loops with students, and offering praise and encouragement to students (Young, 2005).

Enhancing student autonomy through autonomy-supportive strategies and lesson content that has relevance to adolescent lives allows students to align their inner motivational resources, classroom behavior, and academic achievement (Assor, Kaplan, & Roth, 2002; Stefanou, Perencevich, DiCintio, & Turner, 2004; Young, 2005). This strategy encourages students to understand schoolwork in the context of their own interests and goals, which has the potential to help students to develop self-regulation skills and learning strategies to facilitate their academic and professional success.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

Adolescence represents a critical period during which youths struggle to take on new responsibilities and learn decision-making skills while concurrently establishing a sense of self and identity. This period also marks a stage where adolescents are learning to regulate their behavior and cognitive abilities, which can be facilitated by incorporating autonomy-supportive strategies in the classroom (Zimmer-Gembeck & Collins, 2003).

The key to developing and implementing an autonomy-supportive classroom is to become familiar with the strategies that either encourage or inhibit student voice, choice, autonomy, and leadership. Table 1 provides an overview of the features and aspects that characterize an autonomy-supportive motivating instructional style versus a controlling motivating style.

QUICK LINKS: Online Sources for More Information

Collaborative for Academic,
Social and Emotional
Learning (Website)

<http://casel.org/>

Self Determination Theory
(Website)

<http://www.sustainengagement.com/>

*Classroom Observation:
Student Autonomy* (Online
video)

http://www1.teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?title=Classroom_Observation__Student_Autonomy&video_id=185325

Table 1. Defining Features of Two Types of Motivating Styles: Autonomy Supportive and Controlling

Autonomy Supportive Motivating Style	Controlling Motivating Style
<p>Definition: A teaching style that involves understanding and valuing the student’s perspective during instruction</p>	<p>Definition: A teaching style that involves a teacher-centered approach to developing a class agenda and encouraging student compliance with the agenda</p>
<p><i>Key Features</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Encourages a student’s personal motivational resources ■ Incorporates noncontrolling instructional language ■ Promotes worth ■ Acknowledges and accepts negative expressions and attitude 	<p><i>Key Features</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dependent on external motivational sources ■ Utilizes language that is more controlling and pressuring ■ Assertive
<p><small>Adapted from <i>Autonomy Support</i> by Johnmarshall Reeve (n.d.), available online at http://www.education.com/reference/article/autonomy-support/.</small></p>	

Specifically, teachers can take the following actions to promote student autonomy in the classroom:

1. Foster relevance.

Teachers should make an overt effort to incorporate their students’ interests, values, and goals into the learning process by learning about student concerns through informal and classroom dialogue (Learning Point Associates, 2005). Examples include communicating with the students regarding their feedback about classroom tasks and trying to help students understand how a task contributes to their personal objectives (Assor et al., 2002). Research has indicated that students are more likely to be cognitively engaged and use higher-order thinking skills when they find the subject matter interesting (Young, 2005).

2. Make learning authentic.

Instructional practice should build upon students’ foundational knowledge (i.e., background, ideas, skills, and attitudes), challenge students, and also connect content to value beyond the classroom (Donovan & Bransford, 2005; Newmann, Marks, & Gamoran, 1995). Teachers should give assignments that have public or personal value to students (such as oral history projects, or writing editorials for the local newspaper) and also are academically rigorous (Newmann et al., 1995).

3. Provide choice.

Teacher behavior should enable students to choose classroom activities and tasks that are consistent with their interests and goals. Providing students with the opportunity to understand how schoolwork can contribute to their personal goals increases their

ability to work more autonomously (Assor et al., 2002). In addition, asking students for input on classroom activities allows teachers to become more aware of students' psychological needs and to incorporate those needs into the lesson (Reeve, 2010).

4. Promote independent thinking and permit student criticism.

Encouraging students to engage in independent thinking and criticizing lessons that they do not find interesting can provide teachers with opportunities to foster more in-depth conversations about classroom activities. These discussions may allow the teacher to make adjustments to lessons to increase student interest or engage in a dialogue with students about the importance of the task to make them value the assignment (Young, 2005). The overall goal of this strategy would be to increase the opportunities for student voice in the classroom and promote mutual communication between teachers and students regarding lesson content.

5. Be aware of how teacher behaviors can *inhibit* student voice, choice, leadership, and autonomy. Work to eliminate the following behaviors:

- **Micromanaging student work and behavior.** Teachers should avoid unnecessary intrusions related to how students approach their work. Such intrusions inhibit student expression. Students should have the opportunity to discover their natural working patterns in the context of classroom activities (Young, 2005).
- **Assigning tasks that lack relevance and interest to adolescents.** Students are less likely to be responsive to tasks that they do not find interesting or important. Thus, teachers should make an effort to communicate the importance of tasks that they assign and incorporate elements that are relevant to adolescent lives (Reeve, 2009; Young, 2005).
- **Forbidding student criticism and stifling independent thinking.** Teacher behavior that undermines student voice has the potential to inhibit students' ability to conduct self-regulated learning and self-expression. Inhibiting students' ability to express their opinions can be frustrating and interferes with their ability to make connections between classroom activities and their personal interests and goals.

Autonomy-Inducing and Autonomy-Suppressing Teacher Behaviors

Young (2005) describes the following teacher behaviors, which can either induce or suppress student autonomy.

Autonomy-Inducing Teacher Behaviors:

- Listening
- Integrating independent work sessions
- Facilitating peer-to-peer conversations
- Praising and encouraging evidence of improvement or mastery
- Scaffolding
- Creating a responsive environment that supports student questions and comments
- Incorporating student perspective and experiences

Autonomy-Suppressing Teacher Behaviors:

- Dominating learning materials
- Solving problems or answering questions before students have had a chance to work on them independently
- Directive rather than reciprocal feedback
- Interrupting student comments

Student-Generated Classroom Rules

One strategy for promoting student voice, choice, autonomy, and leadership in the classroom is to enable students to generate the rules of the classroom. Following are examples of two school districts that use student-generated classroom rules.

LINN BENTON LINCOLN EDUCATION SERVICE DISTRICT, EUGENE, OREGON

In 2007, the National Center for School Engagement held a contest titled “21 Ways to Engage Students in School,” which included a sampling of best practices designed to foster student leadership in schools, community-based groups, and public agencies. Linn Benton Lincoln Education Service District in Eugene, Oregon, had a winning strategy for creating student-generated classroom rules:

In Eugene, Oregon, students create a list of classroom rules to be followed. Each student signs off on the rules and is held accountable by fellow students. In addition, they developed their own “honor role,” in which students are recognized for doing their best, following directions, and not talking out more than 3 times a day. (National Center for School Engagement, 2007, p. 4)

MT. PLEASANT PUBLIC SCHOOLS, MT. PLEASANT, MICHIGAN

A teacher at Mt. Pleasant High School (see Ling, n.d.) developed a unit on creating student-generated classroom rules. The unit involves multiple examples of real-world relevance, including problem solving, democratic self-government, common good, collective rights, and public discourse.

Classroom Activities:

- Identifying students’ rights that have been recognized by the U.S. Supreme Court.
- Articulating the concept of jurisdiction in the context of classroom rules in a public school setting.
- Writing and prioritizing the most critical student rights and student behaviors that may threaten those rights
- Developing strategies for protecting these student rights.
- Voting on a single set of rules that are appropriate for a variety of classroom settings.
- Monitoring the implementation of the rules with regard to protecting student rights and making adjustment based on majority decisions.

Proposed Unit Assessments:

- **Classroom discussion:** The ability of students to articulate key concepts orally.
- **Group work:** Determining how well students are working in groups to develop a list of rights, identify problem behaviors and create classroom conduct rules.
- **Essay:** Topics could include the relationship between rights and rules in a society, identify the most (or least) important rules that protect individual rights, propose changes to the process for developing class rules.

Teaching Tips:

Teachers should expect to play a role in developing rules with students and may need to generate additional “Teacher rules” to maintain a supportive and productive working environment. However, note that any teacher-generated rules should be kept at a minimum to maintain student ownership over the lesson content.

Additional details about the specific lessons at Mt. Pleasant Public Schools are available through the Learning to Give website at <http://learningtogive.org/lessons/unit18/>.

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Suggestions for Further Reading

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