The Transformative Power of Data-Driven Strategies

A Case Study of Two Wisconsin Middle Schools

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CESA 6 Learning & Assessment

Executive Summary

Throughout 2024, two middle schools in Wisconsin (named North and South in this case study for privacy reasons) transitioned from operational-based structures to those that emphasized the strategic use of data at several levels within each building, including high-quality professional learning and instructional practices. These schools have achieved remarkable improvements by utilizing tools such as Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles, prioritizing student evidence, implementing feedback systems, and consistently reviewing results.

Key initiatives included:

- Strategic abandonment
- Cultivating data-rich Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)/Collaborative Team meetings
- Establishing high-performing teams
- Creating effective feedback cycles

North and South Middle Schools have demonstrated the transformative power of data-driven strategies with dedicated in-person support and collaborative efforts. North Middle School achieved an astounding 200% growth in Reading and 160% in Math, while South Middle School reached 203% in Reading and 167% in Math.

This case study comprehensively outlines the strategies and objectives that drove these successes. We will provide valuable insights and best practices for other schools aiming to enhance instructional practices and student outcomes, empowering them with the knowledge to make a positive change.

Introduction

From 2021 to 2023, North and South Middle Schools have shown varied performance on the WI State Report Card. North's scores were 69.7 (Meets Expectations) in 2020-21, 68.9 (Meets Expectations) in 2021-22, and 70.1 (Exceeds Expectations) in 2022-23. South scored 66.8 (Meets Expectations) in 2020-21, 61.4 (Meets Expectations) in 2021-22, and 55.2 (Meets Few Expectations) in 2022-23.

Additionally, South had 0% growth in Reading and 42% in Math the spring of 2023, while North achieved 75% growth in Reading and 79% in Math. The district contracted with CESA 6 to implement strategic initiatives focused on data-driven practices and high-performing teams.

This case study highlights the substantial growth made in a single school year through intentional practices, building data-rich Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)/Collaborative Team meetings), and valuing evidence.
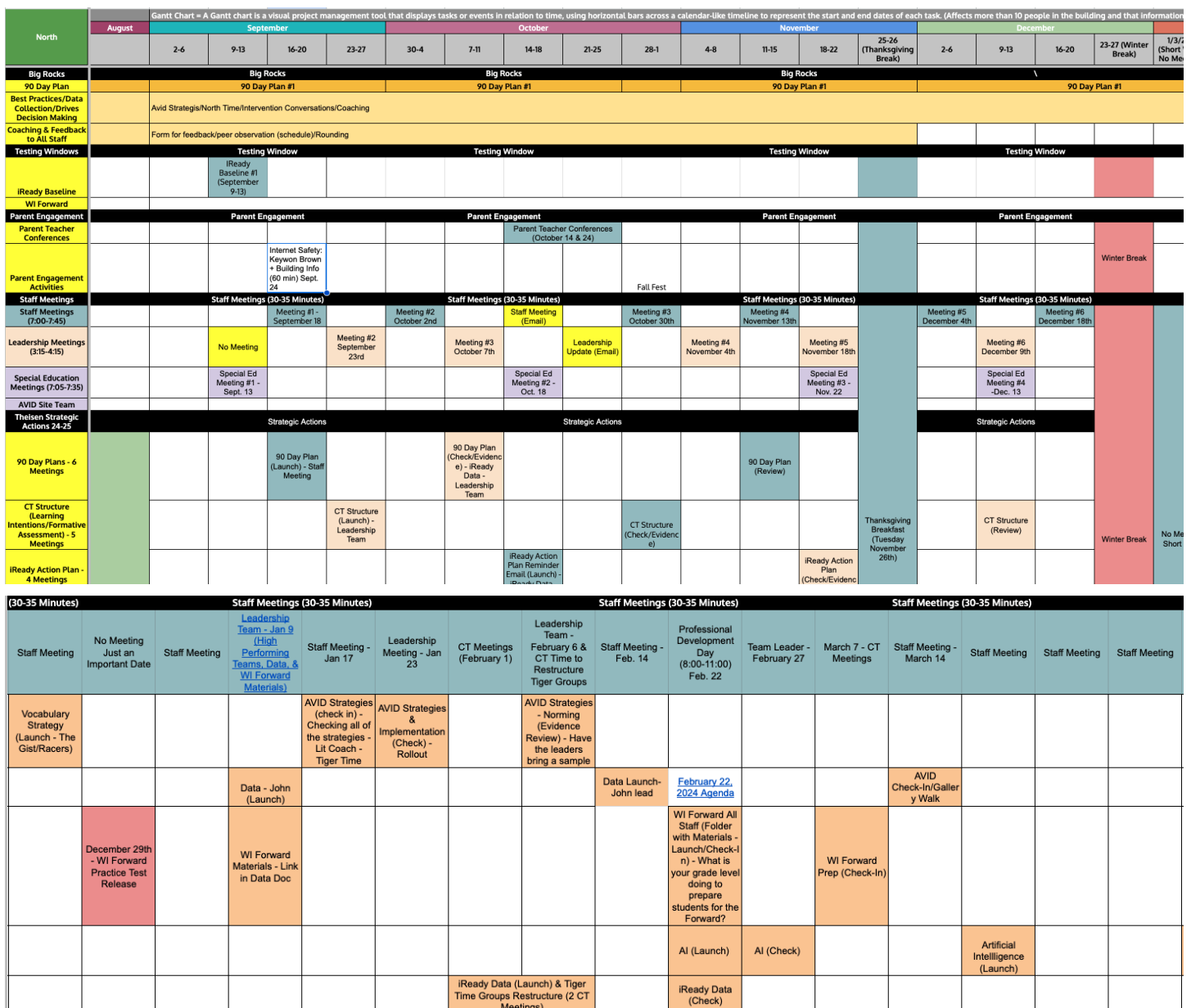
Objectives

CESA 6 met with leaders from both schools to identify key objectives - including dedicating one full day each week for in-person support and structuring high-performing building leadership and administrative team meetings. We emphasized a data-driven and collaborative culture by increasing the use of data during leadership team meetings and conducting thorough reviews of building-wide data, including state report cards and individual student state assessment results.

Effective observation practices were discussed with administrative teams, and consistent feedback cycles (Plus/Deltas, Wonderings, and Parking Lots) were implemented in observations and team meetings to keep staff engaged in a continuous feedback loop.

Additionally, we focused on a rapid-cycle feedback support system (Claim, Evidence, Impact, Questions/Justification), coaching for lesson planning in block classrooms (GANAG Lesson Planning), and creating a consistent feedback loop for academic expectations through staff meetings and PDSA cycles in our PLC/CT meetings.

Bi-weekly consultant and administrative team meetings centered on data and strategic use of a GANTT Chart to outline and share the professional development plan for the school year, ensuring transparency with the staff (GANTT Chart was also developed with North for the 24-25 School Year - Image Below).

Gantt Chart = A Gantt chart is a visual project management tool that displays tasks or events in relation to time, using horizontal bars across a calendar-like timeline to represent the start and end dates of each task. (Affects more than 10 people in the building and that information...)

North

	August	September				October				November				December				
		2-6	9-13	16-20	23-27	30-4	7-11	14-18	21-25	28-1	4-8	11-15	18-22	25-26 (Thanksgiving Break)	2-6	9-13	16-20	23-27 (Winter Break)	1/3 (Short No Me)
Big Rocks		Big Rocks				Big Rocks				Big Rocks					\				
90 Day Plan		90 Day Plan #1				90 Day Plan #1				90 Day Plan #1					90 Day Plan #1				
Best Practices/Data Collection/Drives Decision Making		Avid Strategis/North Time/Intervention Conversations/Coaching																	
Coaching & Feedback to All Staff		Form for feedback/peer observation (schedule)/Rounding																	
Testing Windows		Testing Window				Testing Window				Testing Window					Testing Window				
iReady Baseline			iReady Baseline #1 (September 9-13)																
WI Forward																			
Parent Engagement		Parent Engagement				Parent Engagement				Parent Engagement					Parent Engagement				
Parent Teacher Conferences								Parent Teacher Conferences (October 14 & 24)										
Parent Engagement Activities				Internet Safety: Keywon Brown + Building Info (60 min) Sept. 24						Fall Fest								Winter Break	
Staff Meetings		Staff Meetings (30-35 Minutes)				Staff Meetings (30-35 Minutes)				Staff Meetings (30-35 Minutes)					Staff Meetings (30-35 Minutes)				
Staff Meetings (7:00-7:45)			Meeting #1 - September 18			Meeting #2 October 2nd		Staff Meeting (Email)		Meeting #3 October 30th	Meeting #4 November 13th				Meeting #5 December 4th	Meeting #6 December 18th			
Leadership Meetings (3:15-4:15)			No Meeting	Meeting #2 September 23rd			Meeting #3 October 7th			Leadership Update (Email)	Meeting #4 November 4th		Meeting #5 November 18th			Meeting #6 December 9th			
Special Education Meetings (7:05-7:35)			Special Ed Meeting #1 - Sept. 13					Special Ed Meeting #2 - Oct. 18					Special Ed Meeting #3 - Nov. 22			Special Ed Meeting #4 -Dec. 13			
AVID Site Team																			
Theisen Strategic Actions 24-25		Strategic Actions				Strategic Actions									Strategic Actions				
90 Day Plans - 6 Meetings				90 Day Plan (Launch) - Staff Meeting		90 Day Plan (Check/Evidence) - iReady Data - Leadership Team					90 Day Plan (Review)								
CT Structure (Learning Intentions/Formative Assessment) - 5 Meetings					CT Structure (Launch) - Leadership Team				CT Structure (Check/Evidence)				Thanksgiving Breakfast (Tuesday November 26th)		CT Structure (Review)		Winter Break	No Me Short
iReady Action Plan - 4 Meetings							iReady Action Plan Reminder Email (Launch) - iReady Data					iReady Action Plan (Check/Evidenc...)						

(30-35 Minutes) — Staff Meetings (30-35 Minutes)

Staff Meeting	No Meeting Just an Important Date	Staff Meeting	Leadership Team - Jan 9 (High Performing Teams, Data, & WI Forward Materials)	Staff Meeting - Jan 17	Leadership Meeting - Jan 23	CT Meetings (February 1)	Leadership Team - February 6 & CT Time to Restructure Tiger Groups	Staff Meeting - Feb. 14	Professional Development Day (8:00-11:00) Feb. 22	Team Leader - February 27	March 7 - CT Meetings	Staff Meeting - March 14	Staff Meeting	Staff Meeting	Staff Meeting
Vocabulary Strategy (Launch - The Gist/Racers)			AVID Strategies (check in) - Checking all of the strategies - Lit Coach - Tiger Time	AVID Strategies & Implementation (Check) - Rollout			AVID Strategies - Norming (Evidence Review) - Have the leaders bring a sample								
		Data - John (Launch)						Data Launch- John lead	February 22, 2024 Agenda			AVID Check-In/Gallery Walk			
	December 29th - WI Forward Practice Test Release	WI Forward Materials - Link in Data Doc							WI Forward All Staff (Folder with Materials - Launch/Check-In) - What is your grade level doing to prepare students for the Forward?		WI Forward Prep (Check-In)				
									AI (Launch)	AI (Check)		Artificial Intelligence (Launch)			
						iReady Data (Launch) & Tiger Time Groups Restructure (2 CT Meetings)		iReady Data (Check)							

Context and Challenges

Starting in November/December, North and South Middle Schools had limited time to embrace/shift to a data-literate culture per the WI Department of Public Instruction. In this data-literate culture, we worked to ensure that educators had access to and could interpret, act on, communicate, and reflect upon a variety of data sources. We ensured access to data using a CESA 6 data dashboard, a review of current iReady data, classroom data, attendance data, and PLC/CT meetings that initially focused on surface-level classroom practices with a gradual progression to deeper conversations on student-specific outcomes and needs.

Professional development throughout the year allowed for implementing PDSA Cycles (both formal and informal structures) in PLCs/CT meetings that helped staff make meaning from their data, whether from their diagnostic assessment, personalized pathway, formative/summative data, or other classroom observations. Expectations were clarified during these meetings through the "Do" Section of the PDSA, as well as dedicated professional development days/staff meetings. Additionally, while North didn't officially use a PDSA cycle, their CT meeting agenda reflected a PDSA model without the official title due to our later start time at North Middle School (December 11, 2024).

Both schools' meetings focused on data use throughout their PDSA Cycles emphasizing iReady data, monitoring bottom quartile students, formative/summative data, and current units of study. Our goal was for 80% of students to pass summative assessments during each cycle, and we increased this likelihood by implementing strategies based on John Hattie's high-effect size instructional practices. When we noticed that students were struggling to meet the goals, we had consistent conversations with them to show our support and dedication to their learning.

Transitioning to this data-driven approach quickly was challenging, but it was also embraced by the administration and consistently revisited throughout our time. For example, following the conclusion of each iReady diagnostic window, we reflected at the administrative and staff level by focusing on an RC2A process (Reflect, Collaborate, Act, and Accountability) to ensure that data was acted upon from the highest of levels to the student level.

From: Apr 18, 2024
To: May 9, 2024
Resources: Hattie 250+ , Visible Learning Influence Glossary, https://www.visiblelearningmetax.com/, DOK 1, DOK 2, DOK 3, WI DPI Academic Standards

PLAN: What do we plan to learn?	DO: How will we ensure that students learn?

iReady Personalized Instruction: Ensure that district iReady expectations are met at least 80% weekly.
    ○ 60+ Minutes = 80%
    ○ 2 Lessons Passed Per Week
End of Unit Results:
	Teacher will:
	    ● iReady Personalized Instruction:
	        ○ Notes:
	    ● Bottom Quartile/Strategic Monitoring:
	        ○ Notes (Describe Your Process for BQ & SM):
	    ● Current Unit of Study (There is a no strategy option):
	        ○ Providing Clear Learning Intentions .75 ▾ - John Hattie

Bottom Quartile: Ensure that students in the Bottom Quartile are being monitored on their iReady results (meeting district expectations) and their learning in the classroom is being consistently discussed.
End of Unit Results:
	Students will:
	Current Unit of Study Students will (There is a no strategy option):
	    ● Additional Notes: Tracking Clarity on Learning Intentions
	        ○ Admin Learning Intentions Chart

Current Unit of Study (How will you know if students are proficient?):
    ● 80% of students will pass their weekly formative assessments during the current unit of study resulting in 80% of students passing their summative assessment.
        ○ Emphasis on the Bottom Quartile Passing Assessments
End of Unit Results:	

ACT - How will we respond when some students do not learn?	**STUDY - How will we know if they learn it?**

Strategies and Processes Implemented

1. On-site support for Data-Rich Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)

During the 23-24 school year, PLCs (Collaborative Team Time) underwent significant changes, shifting from a static traditional setting to PDSA cycles focused on achieving 80% passing rates on summative assessments. Weekly meetings followed a consistent template, emphasizing John Hattie's high-effect size practices, evidence-based strategies, and professional sharing.

Each cycle included a "Do" section for teacher actions, a "Student Do" Section for expected outcomes, a "Study" section for analyzing various data points, and an "Act" section for the next steps. This approach to PLC time cultivated goal-oriented discussions and improved student learning outcomes.

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PLAN: What do we plan to learn?	DO: How will we ensure that students learn?
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ACT - How will we respond when some students do not learn?	**STUDY - How will we know if they learn it?**

2. Establishing High-Performing Teams

The development of high-performing teams began at the first meeting where we discussed the purpose and role of each team within the building. While we didn't always change the team, we did intentionally work on shifting agendas to focus more on strategic work instead of operational items.

Collaboration and continuous improvement were fostered by reviewing the frequency with which teams met and reflecting on the agenda items being discussed. As part of our work in meetings, we implemented various feedback loops to get feedback from the staff, including plus/deltas, wonderings, and parking lots - which increased engagement. Through the course of the year, we also worked on the development of agendas to ensure that more items were strategic than operational.

After our time, it led to North Middle School even revamping its process and team for the upcoming school year to ensure that strategic items were focused on consistently.

Meeting Agenda Format

Operational (No Discussion)			
Strategic			
Time	**Topic**	**Guiding Question & Notes**	**Next Steps**
		Guiding Question	**Next Steps:**

Plus Delta Chart Template

Plus **+**	Delta ▲

3. Creating Feedback Loops

Feedback in education is crucial. By implementing structures that collect student data through CT meeting agendas focused on operational work vs. strategic work and PDSA Cycles, we created a system where we valued evidence of student learning during these meetings every week.

Beyond the PLC/CT meetings, we also made other shifts throughout the school year, including but not limited to GANAG-organized staff meetings, additional application time on topics, and an ensured understanding that topics were not one-and-done professional development by the strategic implementation of a GANTT Chart and the Rule of 3 for coming back to topics.

The processes and systems that were in place refined our approaches, provided greater clarity to staff, and put our teams in a place to be more proactive than reactive throughout the school year.

Name: **All Staff Feedback** Date: January 4, 2024
Staff Meeting Presentation Link: WI Forward/Student Motivation
On a Scale of 1-10 how would you rate the productivity of the meeting today?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

27 Forms collected - 248 / 270 collective ave. 9.2 for the productivity of the meeting today.
If you did not turn in a form at the end of the meeting, please give it to   when you are complete at some time today. I will then add your input:-)

Plus (What Went Well)	Delta (What Would You Change)
- I thought the presentation was informative. I like the ideas of the "speech" - Thank you. I like the proactive planning - Having exposure to WI Forward is helpful - Time to explore - Motivation speech ideas - Looking at changes to Forward was great - Ideas for elevator speech - Sharing ideas about how to motivate students for testing - Reminder that iReady & Forward are coming up - Great idea to get everyone ready to have conversations with students - Loved being able to see the new writing prompts - Got to see questions and see what we have not taught yet - Start to talk test - Answered parking lot questions let everyone know where we are at - Took a peek at the practice test to see what kids are asked to know.	- Start the plan for Forward - Need Letters Home etc. - Random calling or getting these involved that aren't always - Team time or group time to discuss what we can do at a grade level/schoolwide. - A little fast paced for talking time, but really enjoyed more of the "meat" we can continue to process. - Some/Most of our Q's the students don't learn until Ch9 Can we have an iReady or WI Forward for Dummies Portion? I feel like I have questions on stuff people assume I already know.

4. Strategic Abandonment

Strategic abandonment involves identifying and phasing out ineffective practices to focus on those that positively impact student achievement.

We prioritized a few AVID strategies, emphasizing them through professional development while pausing other initiatives. Bi-weekly admin meetings then concentrated on critical items, avoiding distractions. Resources and time were reallocated to effective strategies, using the Rule of 3 (3 Hours, 3 Days, 3 Weeks, 3 Months) for planning professional learning opportunities.

Team	Team Purpose	Team Members	Alignment to the School Improvement Team	Team Meeting Documentation	Meeting Time	Meeting Frequency	Time in a School Year	Results of Team Check
Collaborative Team Time	Action Planning	Grade Level Team Members	Yes	6th CT 7th CT 8th CT	40 Minutes	1x a Week (ELA & Math Separate)	About 24 Hours	/44
Department Meetings	AVID Strategies, Operational Items, Connect with best practices to support student learrning	Staff Team Memberrs	Partial	Slideshow	30 Minutes (First Thursday)	1x a Month	4.5 Hours	/44
AVID Best Practices	Best Practices - Example Critical Reading Process -		Yes		3rd Thursday (30 Minutes)	1x a Month		/44
Staff Meeting	90 Day Continuous Improvement Plan/Data Forward as a School	All Staff	Yes	Staff Meeting Agenda	4th Thursday (30 Minutes)	1x a Month	4 1/2 Hours	/44
Grade Level Meetings	- Team to discuss planning and agenda - Avid weekly articles	Grade Level Team Members	Partial		Rest of the Month on Wednesday	3x a Month		/44
Building Leadership Team	District Items	Team Leaders for 2023-24: 8th Grade/Science, 6th Grade/Social Studies, 7th Grade/CC-Sped, 6th Grade/Encore/PE, 8th Grade/Math, 7th Grade/ELA - Instructional Coaches: Literacy Instructional Coach Internal, ELA, Sped., and Math - Administrators:	Yes	Building Leadership Team	2nd and 4th Monday of Every Month (40 Minutes)	2x a Month	12 Hours	/44
Admin Team Meeting	Orient and Focus the work of Middle School	Admin Team	Yes		TBD (60 Minutes)	2x a Month	16 Hours	/44

5. Planning for WI Forward

To prepare for the Wisconsin Forward Exam, we began strategic planning at the start of our time at both North and South Middle Schools. The assessment planning was integrated into our GANTT Chart, ensuring staff had early access to data and resources. We focused on goal setting, elevator speeches, and a growth mindset.

Curriculum and instruction were reviewed to set alignment between the newly revised Forward Blueprints to ensure content wasn't covered at a point past the WI Forward assessment while also avoiding a crash course right before the test, which doesn't allow for information to go from working memory to long-term memory.

Professional development leading up to the WI Forward assessment supported teachers, and the Rule of 3 was used to revisit key initiatives, emphasizing a consistent focus on valuable topics and areas.

Wisconsin Forward/Data One Pager

Proficiency Ranges for the WI Forward

Content Area	Grade	Score Ranges			
		Below Basic	Basic	Proficient	Advanced
English Language Arts	3	330-521	522-569	570-623	624-900
	4	340-545	546-591	592-649	650-930
	5	350-563	564-609	610-669	670-940
	6	360-571	572-621	622-670	671-950
	7	370-584	585-637	638-696	697-960
	8	380-591	592-651	652-707	708-970
Mathematics	3	360-516	517-559	560-610	611-760
	4	405-535	536-587	588-632	633-800
	5	430-573	574-610	611-657	658-830
	6	440-581	582-625	626-687	688-870
	7	450-605	606-646	647-711	712-880
	8	470-619	620-666	667-717	718-890
Science	4	300-446	447-495	496-542	543-725
	8	480-652	653-694	695-736	737-945
Social Studies	4	330-460	461-490	491-536	537-700
	8	540-661	662-692	693-733	734-860
	10	645-769	770-804	805-836	837-980

Data Literate Culture (Red - What we have as far as current thoughts on these items):

Ensuring Access to Data -

Making Meaning from Data - Here's What, So What, Now What - Standards Blueprints

Clarifying Expectations for Data Use - Working through CT meetings - Staff Data Meetings

Building Knowledge and Skills to Use Data - Continuing to work through our PDSA Cycles - Staff Meetings

Leading a Culture of Data Use - Having staff meetings and other meetings where data is present is a start

Standards Blueprint (Shows what standards will be addressed on the WI Forward in 2024):

- 2024 ELA Wisconsin Forward Blueprint
- 2024 Math Wisconsin Forward Blueprint
- 2024 Forward Social Studies Blueprint

Lessons Learned and Best Practices

- Buy-in from district and building administrators was crucial to success, highlighting the need for commitment from all stakeholders.
- Beginning with the CESA 6 data build at the start of our conversations helped support informed decision-making and continuous improvement.
- Shifting from static agendas to PDSA Cycles and strategic discussions fostered more effective and goal-oriented meetings.
- Ongoing professional development enhanced teachers' ability to use data and implement high-effect size instructional practices.
- The work of strategic abandonment allowed the phasing out of less effective practices, which allowed for the reallocation of resources and time where needed.
- Continuous improvement was maintained through feedback loops like Plus/Deltas, Parking Lots, and ongoing conversations around critical topics.
- Utilizing a GANTT Chart provided a transparent, intentional plan for professional development and critical initiatives.

These best practices set a strong foundation for sustained improvement and enhanced student outcomes.

Conclusion

North and South Middle Schools successfully implemented data-driven strategies, including PDSA Cycles (Official and Unofficial), professional development, and effective feedback systems, leading to significant growth in student performance. The concept of strategic abandonment helped phase out "clutter" and ineffective practices, reallocating resources to more impactful strategies.

Strategic planning and preparation for the WI Forward assessment were integrated from the start of our time at both schools. During this preparation, we focused on goal setting, curriculum alignment, and professional development. These efforts helped align a continuous improvement and collaboration culture, utilizing data to refine instructional practices and enhance student outcomes.

Moving forward, implementing the PDSA Cycles at the classroom level while maintaining a data-literate culture would be beneficial to continuing and sustaining these achievements.

To learn how we can help you transform your district or school with data-driven strategies, contact us today.

Addendum: Additional Note Support for 24-25 School Year

Meeting 6.17.24:

Helped North with the beginning of their GANTT Chart and CT Template for the 24-25 School Year.

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AVID Site Team																			

North Middle School – Grade Team 6

Quick Links (Purple ELA, Red Math, Green SS, Yellow SS - Move your color as you advance units)

Unit 1				Unit 2				Unit 3				Unit 4				Unit 5		
🟪	🟥	🟩	🟨															
Unit 6				Unit 7				Unit 8				Unit 9				Unit 10		

Day	Deliverable	Team Structure
Monday	Each **grade team** will set weekly learning targets and a plan to share them.	Grade Teams ▾
Tuesday	Admin Day	Grade Teams ▾
Wednesday	SS & Science: Formative Assessment Data ELA & Math: iReady data, bottom quartile review, and current unit of study notes.	Course-Alike ▾
Thursday	Staff will create 2 formative assessments for next week using the checklist. - ELA, Math, Science, and SS doing the same st	Course-Alike ▾
Friday	Staff will use this week's data to plan for next week.	Course-Alike ▾

TUESDAY ADMIN DAY AGENDA LINKS:

9.3.24	9.10.24	9.17.24	9.24.24	10.1.24	10.8.24
10.15.24	10.22.24	10.29.24	11.5.24	11.12.24	11.19.24
11.26.24	12.3.24	12.10.24	12.17.24	1.7.25	1.14.25
1.21.24	1.28.25	2.4.25	2.11.25	2.18.25	2.25.25
3.4.25	3.11.25	3.18.25	3.25.25	4.1.25	4.8.25

UNIT 1

Monday Deliverable: Each **grade team** will set weekly learning targets and a plan to share them.

Priority Standard this Week:

Learning Intentions:
- ☐ Teacher Clarity Article
- ☐ Unit Learning Targets/Lesson Plans - GANAG Outline

Teacher Plans:
- ● ELA, Math, Social Studies, Science (Link Plans)

Prompt Clear Objective Notes: Clearly define your educational objective before prompting ChatGPT for targeted and productive insights.

Tuesday Deliverable: ADMIN DAY (grade team) - CLICK LINKS TO MEETINGS AT TOP OF DOCUMENT

Wednesday Deliverable: iReady data, bottom quartile review, and current unit of study notes.

SS & Science Common Formative Assessment Data

Step #1: Enter % Correct for Students on Common Formative Assessment *(Add all students together to get your percentage)*

Subject	FA Results Week 1		FA Results Week 2		FA Results Week 3		FA Results Week 4	
Social Studies								
Science								

Step #2: Plan reteaching/next steps/assessment development for next week

ELA & Math Wednesday - iReady Data, BQ, Current Unit of Study

Time/Topic	Guiding Question, Notes, & Next Steps - IREADY
	Ensure that district iReady expectations are met at least 80% weekly. 60+ Minutes = 80% 2 Lessons Passed Per Week