

2013-14 Minnesota Teacher Evaluation Pilot:
Perpich Center for Arts Education Arts High School

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Appendix 1

CASE STORY:

State Arts High School Pilots Minnesota Teacher Evaluation Model

The Arts High School (AHS) at the Perpich Center for Arts Education, a Minnesota state agency, joined a small group of schools in 2013-14 to field test a legislatively mandated teacher evaluation program slated for statewide implementation the following year. The school was one of six educational units piloting the entire Model. Eleven other districts piloted selected portions. This story about trying out a new teacher evaluation model at a small arts high school focuses on two questions: What happened during what was known as the Model Pilot at the Perpich Arts High School? What might be learned by analyzing a particular teacher evaluation Model as it was first implemented for the evaluation of arts and non-arts teachers in an arts-focused high school?

The Arts High School

Perpich Arts High School opened its doors in 1989 and graduated its first class in 1991. It is a tuition-free, public, residential high school for students throughout Minnesota in 11th and 12th grades. The school is part of Perpich Center for Arts Education, a state agency created in 1985 and funded by the Minnesota legislature to promote access to and opportunities in arts education for all Minnesota students, teachers, and schools.ⁱ Students audition to attend the Arts High School; during their matriculation, admitted students focus on one art form in addition to academic subjects. Dance, Theater, Music, Media Arts, Literary Arts, and Visual Arts are offered. Academic classes meet each morning and arts classes each afternoon throughout the school year. During the Pilot year, 235 students were enrolled at AHS. All of the school's 26 teachers participated in the Pilot. Of these, 14 are arts teachers.

The Teacher Evaluation Model

The "Teacher Development, Evaluation, and Peer Support Model" (the Model) was piloted in 2013-14 to become the new default state teacher evaluation program. The Model is intended, according to the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), to be both an example of best practice in the field and a model for those districts that fail to reach joint agreement with teachers to employ any other model for teacher evaluation.ⁱⁱ School districts and exclusive representatives of teachers such as unions may develop their own evaluation method, purchase commercially available models, adopt this state model, or modify the state model to suit their local needs, so long as their processes meet twelve criteria prescribed by statute. Acceptable models for the Pilot year needed to:

- provide the requisite evaluations for probationary teachers;
- establish a three-year professional review cycle for each teacher that includes an individual growth and development plan, peer review, and at least one summative evaluation by a qualified and trained evaluator;
- be based on the *Minnesota Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers* named in MN Rule 8710.2000;
- coordinate staff development activities with the evaluation process and outcomes;
- allow teachers to present a portfolio demonstrating evidence of reflection and professional growth that includes teachers' own performance assessments;

- use an agreed-upon teacher value-added Model where value-added data are available; use state or local student growth measures where value-added data are unavailable as a basis for 35% of teacher evaluation results (This component has since been amended.)
- use longitudinal data on student engagement and connection and other student outcome measures aligned with curriculum for which teachers are responsible;
- require qualified and trained evaluators to perform summative evaluations;
- give teachers not meeting professional teaching standards the support to improve with established goals and timelines; and
- discipline a teacher who does not adequately improve.

In addition an acceptable model **could**:

- allow school time for coaching and collaboration; and
- include mentoring and induction programs.

The Minnesota’s default model focuses on three components: teacher practice, student engagement, and student learning and achievement. Each component receives a score; the scores are weighted within the summative evaluation process.

Component	How is this component defined?	How is this component measured?	Weight
1. Teacher Practice	By 4 domains—planning, instruction, environment, and professionalism—in the <i>Minnesota Performance Standards for Teacher Practice</i> and each domain’s associated indicators and elements.	Evaluators use the <i>Minnesota Performance Standards for Teacher Practice</i> rubric and evidence gathered from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Points of contact; • Teacher self-assessments and peer review; • Optional teacher portfolio. 	45%
2. Student Engagement	As “an organizing framework for examining a student’s commitment to and involvement in learning, which includes academic, behavioral, cognitive, and affective components. It is influenced by the context of family, peers, community, and school. Within the classroom, teachers can influence student engagement through their relationships with students and the relevance and rigor of their instruction.”	Evaluator uses results of a student survey for 15 percent; for 5 percent, use evidence gathered from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Points of contact; • Self-assessment and peer review; • Optional teacher portfolio. 	20%
3. Student Learning and Achievement	As “student outcomes as measured by the assessments that have the highest levels of confidence and commonality”	According to a teacher’s teaching assignment, evaluator uses combinations of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher value-added data; • Class goal results; • Targeted-need student goal results; • Shared-performance goal results. 	35%

The Summative Evaluation Process

Continuous improvement is the goal of the Model. An official summative evaluation occurs every three years for non-probationary teachers, and they, along with the remaining teachers not being scored that year, must complete the work required by each component of the Model. For the Teacher Practice

component, each teacher is required to create an Individual Growth and Development Plan (IGDP). For the Student Learning and Achievement component, teachers devise Student Learning Goals (SLG) and collect data to determine if the goals are met. For both of these elements, all teachers also need to consult with peers (Points of Contact) on their progress.

Peer review is considered key to the ongoing process of professional development. At the Arts High School, Points of Contact occurred within the structure of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). The AHS staff preferred that PLCs be formed to support teachers' implementation of new strategies related to their IGDP and SLG improvement targets during the pilot because they did not feel they wanted to take on the complicated scheduling and requisite documenting of individual meetings with each other more informally.

For the Student Engagement component of the Model, all teachers also received student engagement data collected using a tool designed by Minnesota stakeholders convened by the MDE. The piloted tool was administered in February to students; the tool asked each student to respond to questions about qualities of engagement with several of their teachers.

To make the Model more seamless with school improvement efforts and whole staff professional development, AHS leadership elected to hire a professional development coordinator. The contracted independent consultant led professional development throughout the year and helped school administration with the implementation of the Pilot Model. Additionally she worked with teachers as a peer coach. Regarding the Model, the school leadership's intention was to provide embedded professional development to all teachers with the intention that all would be moving toward reaching proficiency on the *Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers*, the Model rubric.

From the outset it was made clear that the professional developer/coach was not to be a summative evaluator. That role was reserved for the school principal. The professional developer/coach served as a resource to teachers. She was available to observe in the classroom and provide feedback afterward. She also frequently consulted on lesson and unit design and assessment development; she co-taught and modeled new strategies, and facilitated three of five PLCs. The PERPICH CENTER media specialist facilitated two other PLCs in which teachers' goals related to the use of technology and provided individual coaching on technology integration. She also trained students on the use of new tech tools and researched available instructional technology options.

For those teachers receiving a summative evaluation, the principal determined a minimum threshold of evidence needed for him to fairly complete the Model's requirements and adjusted the number of his observations and conferences with teachers afterward accordingly. Because during the pilot year none of the evaluations was 'high stakes,' that is, the scores were not official during the experimental period, the principal was in effect receiving training and practice in the Model throughout the year alongside and in addition to the faculty members and coach.

Teachers had agreed to participate in the Pilot and were eager to give feedback on the process as it unfolded. The state retained the Center for Applied Research in Educational Innovation (CAREI) at the University of Minnesota to research the Pilot. Four AHS teachers were interviewed individually at the outset of the project and again when the pilot year came to an end. The school received a \$30,000 grant from the MDE for participating in the yearlong project. At AHS, leadership determined to use a portion of the funds to give a stipend of \$300 to each teacher who completed every element of the Pilot.

Timeline: the Pilot Year

August 2013: Introducing the Model and The Individual Growth and Development Plan

The 2013-2014 school year started out under the leadership of the previous year’s principal. Piloting the Model began during an August pre-service professional development session when a trainer and Model developer from the MDE worked with the faculty for a full day to introduce the Model’s design, the *Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers* rubric, and the scoring system. After the three components and the weighted scoring design were demonstrated, the faculty discussed the roles of teacher, evaluator, and peer reviewer in the Model and had preliminary experiences role-playing each position.

Updated 8/20/2013



Performance Standards for Teacher Practice Rubric

DOMAIN 1: PLANNING

Indicator A: Aligns learning targets with standards and student data inform planning

- i. Plans units and lessons effectively
- ii. Selects learning targets and activities
- iii. Applies content knowledge and understanding of how students learn
- iv. Uses student data to inform planning

Indicator B: Uses content, resources and student knowledge to design coherent instruction

- i. Designs coherent instruction
- ii. Creates interdisciplinary and extended learning experiences
- iii. Uses available resources and technology
- iv. Designs culturally relevant instructional strategies

Indicator C: Plans for assessment and differentiation

- i. Plans formative and summative assessments
- ii. Plans for differentiation

DOMAIN 2: ENVIRONMENT

Indicator A: Creates a respectful classroom culture of trust, safety and high expectations

- i. Creates a safe learning environment
- ii. Establishes a culture of learning
- iii. Creates a culture of persistence

Indicator B: Establishes and maintains clear expectations for classroom and behavior management

- i. Establishes and maintains classroom routines and procedures
- ii. Monitors and provides feedback on student behavior

DOMAIN 3: INSTRUCTION

Indicator A: Communicates learning targets and content effectively

- i. Uses content knowledge to promote learning
- ii. Communicates learning targets and content

Indicator B: Facilitates activities and discussions that promote high cognitive engagement

- i. Uses instructional strategies to engage students
- ii. Uses questioning and discussion techniques
- iii. Uses appropriate pacing and structure

Indicator C: Uses varied assessment techniques to advance student learning

- i. Uses formative assessments to inform instruction
- ii. Provides feedback to advance learning
- iii. Promotes student self-assessment

DOMAIN 4: PROFESSIONALISM

Indicator A: Reflects on teaching practice

- i. Uses self-reflection to improve instruction
- ii. Uses feedback to improve instruction
- iii. Plans for professional growth

Indicator B: Engages in professional development

- i. Participates in professional development
- ii. Collaborates with colleagues
- iii. Contributes to school and district culture for learning

Indicator C: Maintains professional responsibilities and communicates with families

- i. Adheres to standards of ethical conduct
- ii. Maintains accurate records
- iii. Completes tasks in an organized and efficient manner
- iv. Communicates with families
- v. Understands the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students, their families and the community

Unsatisfactory	Development Needed	Effective	Exemplary
Teacher relies on ongoing assistance and support to complete daily responsibilities. Teacher has difficulty internalizing effective teaching practices.	Teacher is moving toward self-direction and independence. The teacher understands effective teaching practices and is beginning to directly apply knowledge and skill to planning, instruction and/or assessment.	Teacher is able to teach independently, internalizes feedback, and easily applies what she/he is learning about teaching. The teacher is beginning to move beyond the classroom in developing teaching skill, forming collegial relationships and may be seen as an instructional leader among peers. The teacher plans and delivers lessons that involve the students in constructing their own learning and engages them in thinking and 21 st century skills.	Teacher consistently and effectively excels in areas of teaching, professional growth, reflection, action research and pedagogical skills. The teacher at this level continually engages families and the broader community in the learning process. The teacher is often seen as an instructional leader among peers. The teacher engages students in an active role in the design and implementation of classroom system, rituals, and routines.

At this first meeting, teachers were also charged to draft an Individual Growth and Development Plan (IGDP) for the school year that was based on the *Performance Standards for Teacher Practice* rubric. The teachers began by scripting a video of a teacher demonstrating a lesson. After a short discussion about

how each of them would score what they observed, the teachers assessed themselves, reflecting upon their own practice using the *Performance Standards for Teacher Practice* rubric. By doing this, each teacher identified his or her own base-line score for each criterion. Each teacher then selected those criteria that they had judged needed further growth in their practice, wrote their plan, and discussed the plan with a peer before turning it in to the principal. (Appendix includes a sample with name redacted.)

As it happened, the school's participation in the Pilot occurred the same year as its five-year accreditation review by AdvancED, a non-profit, non-partisan organization that conducts on-site external reviews of PreK-12 schools. Because the accreditation work was also beginning during fall pre-service meetings, the teachers and principal took an additional pre-school workshop day with the staff to work on assessing the school as a whole using AdvanED's accreditation standards.

The two processes— whole school improvement and individual professional improvement —were meant to converse and eventually converge over the course of the Pilot year. Explicit connections were made between school wide descriptions of best practice provided by AdvanceED and the *MDE Performance Standards for Teacher Practice* rubric. Both the accreditation process and the Pilot Model shared a paradigm of continuous improvement with emphasis on collaboration and peer support.

September 30: Teacher Practice Component training

A month into the school year MDE trainers returned to AHS to continue preparing the teachers to implement the Pilot. Teachers were informed that in order to evaluate their practice, evaluators followed several steps. The evaluator would first gather relevant evidence via observation and then align what was observed to the rubric to determine a rating based on the salient proof. The evaluator needed to ensure the ratings were calibrated accurately and demonstrated inter-rater reliability. Finally, the evaluator needed to communicate effectively with the teacher in reporting the scoring. Because the Model is predicated on frequent, accurate, specific, and timely feedback, there was additional training for evaluators that emphasized how feedback should be delivered. Evaluators and peer reviewers were to utilize coaching skills when providing feedback with the intent that the Model serve primarily as a tool for supportive and individualized professional development. To practice giving feedback the teachers employed reflective listening during face-to-face conversations. Later, during discussion, several teachers questioned the idea that evidence could be collected with fidelity to substantiate an observation score.

October 15: Pulling back to see the BIG PICTURE

In mid-October the staff assembled again on a late start day to talk “big picture” during a short professional development session. The principal had recently been reassigned to a second PERPICH CENTER managed school and the assistant principal had been promoted. He would assume the summative evaluator role. The new principal told the staff that they were nudging ahead on two related and large initiatives. One focused on individual teachers as professionals and the other focused on the school as a learning institution. Both efforts aimed to improve student achievement and each teacher's own capacities to positively affect student growth. Throughout the year the MDE Teacher Evaluation and Peer Support Pilot would happen alongside the accreditation process, he explained. The school leadership asked faculty members to commit to the accreditation standards that asked the school to plan for coherent curricular pathways and assessments. He, supported by the professional developer/coach, shared the following narrative:

We're creating the story of our strengths as a school. We're working to gather compelling evidence to flesh out and illustrate the story. The story is a work in

progress—and it's made up of many stories. We have a mental model for getting where we're going. We want continuous improvement for ourselves professionally, and for our students. We have two dovetailed frameworks, whole school, and individual teacher focused. We believe we need to work collaboratively to improve. From time to time we will prototype, plan, critique, and gather information that helps us tell how we're progressing. That's what we're beginning today.

The principal pointed out that three of the four domains *Minnesota's Standards of Effective Practice for Teachers* rubric addressed teaching and assessment:

DOMAIN 1: PLANNING

Indicator A: Aligns learning targets with standards and student data inform planning

Indicator B: Uses content, resources and student knowledge to design coherent instruction

Indicator C: Plans for assessment and differentiation

DOMAIN 2: ENVIRONMENT

Indicator A: Creates a respectful classroom culture of trust, safety and high expectations

Indicator B: Establishes and maintains clear expectations for classroom and behavior management

DOMAIN 3: INSTRUCTION

Indicator A: Communicates learning targets and content effectively

Indicator B: Facilitates activities and discussions that promote high cognitive engagement

Indicator C: Uses varied assessment techniques to advance student learning

He suggested that the fourth domain of the rubric, Professionalism, aligned with AdvancED accreditation standards for shared governance and leadership to promote and support student performance and school effectiveness.

DOMAIN 4: PROFESSIONALISM

Indicator A: Reflects on teaching practice

i. Uses self-reflection to improve instruction

ii. Uses feedback to improve instruction

iii. Plans for professional growth

Indicator B: Engages in professional development

i. Participates in professional development

ii. Collaborates with colleagues

iii. Contributes to school and district culture for learning

Indicator C: Maintains professional responsibilities and communicates with families

i. Adheres to standards of ethical conduct

ii. Maintains accurate records

iii. Completes tasks in an organized and efficient manner

iv. Communicates with families

v. Understands the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students, their families, and the community

A big concern of his, the principal said, was that the school lacked the kind of school-wide assessment data privileged in both the Pilot Model and accreditation processes. For example, in the Pilot, grade level and school wide goals were to be referenced when available as the teachers built their individual SLG plan. Only two data sources, however were available by grade level at AHS. One was the score from the PSAT, which all 11th graders took in October, shortly after starting at Perpich. The PSAT measures K-11

learning, and the students at AHS take it after being in the school as 11th graders for one month. The scores became available to the school midway through the students' 11th grade year.

The other large-scale assessment was the Grade 11 Mathematics MCA-III (Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment). The MCA is administered in the spring, with scores available the following fall. Neither of these tests provided timely information relevant to instruction.

To be able to use learning data from common assessments at the Arts High School the principal and professional developer/coach stated that the school would need to establish a timeline for setting measurable shared learning targets and also then design or locate appropriate measures. In the ensuing conversation, faculty members agreed that the existing school learning goals were inspirational and were not measured intentionally. The staff identified this as an area where they would need more training and support.

Later in the fall, when the calendar for professional development and the school improvement plan needed for accreditation began to take shape, they included language very similar to the Model:

- Determine outcomes desired of every AHS graduate.
- Choose or develop assessments and establish mastery scores.
- Pre-assess students to determine preparedness.
- Set student learning goal targets (class and targeted need).
- Assess learning.
- Analyze data.
- Adjust instruction.

At the end of the meeting, the principal emphasized the importance of coming up with a coherent description of performance goals for all students at AHS during the next two years. The discussion turned to the types of assessments the teachers were currently using. The principal committed to finding time for the staff to investigate promising practices that might help the school in the student learning goal process. This proved to be the year's biggest hurdle, and shaped the school's work going forward.

October 31: Introduction to the Professional Learning Community Cycle

Although initially each teacher had asked two other teachers to serve as peer reviewers, during the time between the short meeting on October 15 and the full-day session for professional development scheduled for October 31, teachers voiced concerns to the principal that the Model had, as the dance teacher said, "too many moving parts." Several teachers worried to each other and to the principal that they did not feel trained well enough to serve as peer reviewers on a rubric that was new to all.

The principal and professional developer/coach checked-in regularly with an MDE project advisor who provided both with training and professional assistance and advice. The MDE advisor reassured them that the peer reviewers did not have to operate independently, and should the school create Professional Learning Communities that would focus on the teachers' professional growth targets as planned, those meetings would count toward the needed Points of Contact. The two of them, principal and coach, then grouped the teachers according to the domains on the rubric each teacher desired to address that year. A very large number of the teachers were desirous of more training in using technology to support their instruction. Two groups were created and the media specialist was asked if she could provide professional development to them using the structure of a PLC. She enthusiastically said she could. Another PLC was formed around the domain that addressed classroom environment. The

principal agreed to work with this group. Two more were formed around assessment goals and interdisciplinary unit design; the professional developer/coach agreed to facilitate them.

When the group met on October 31 the teachers were introduced to the PLC as a construct and a process. The meeting's goal was to plan a Professional Learning Community cycle that would occur during the Pilot year. A handful of teachers had experience with the PLC model of professional development in previous schools, but most teachers did not. The principal and professional developer/coach asked the teachers to check their assumptions about PLCs against the mental model AHS would use.

The PLC model at AHS, they made clear, would assume that the core mission of formal education is not simply to ensure that students are taught but to ensure that they learn. Generally, in a PLC a group, colleagues who share common goals and values work as a collaborative team to improve student learning. PLCs are result- and action-oriented as part of a schoolwide commitment to continuous improvement. At AHS during the Pilot year the teachers would work collaboratively in an ongoing process of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they worked with.

Four or more times during the Pilot year the teachers were to take part in quality conversations that included discussing their students' learning strengths and needs, addressing them with a strategy the group and research suggested might help the students grow, and then after implementing it, gathering specific qualitative and quantitative evidence of learning to find out about the effects of the learning approach.

Veteran staff were particularly eager to take more responsibility for their own professional growth after several years at the school when they had taken part in more presentational styles of professional development. One of the most commonly mentioned needs teachers articulated was that they had no real understanding of what their colleagues were doing with the students they shared and whether their colleagues got better or different results. The goal, by consensus, became to develop shared language through frequent professional conversations as the teachers learned new instructional strategies.

The teachers were able to then vet their placement in the PLC groups by each discussing the focus of their IGDP goal and/or Student Learning Goal. After each presentation the other group members identified connections with their own question. The facilitators listened in and began thinking about resources for the proposed projects. The PLCs would kick-off on the afternoon of the next full day professional development session, but each group made an appointment with their facilitator to meet before that and plan.

December 12: Student Learning Goals (SLG)

As yet, teachers had not set out to write Student Learning Goals (SLG) in the format being piloted as part of the Model. As described by the MDE, the impetus behind having teachers set student learning targets was that they develop strategies for the refinement and implementation of growth measures, beginning with templates and checklists of criteria that the MDE deemed critical to establishing clear, coherent goals. The thinking was that although teachers may teach in ways deemed professional, to be excellent they also need to gauge often what their students are learning or being confused by.

According to the MDE, Shared Performance Goals are student outcome goals for the *whole student population*. These goals are meant to directly align with school-wide goals developed by the leadership

team and principal of a building. Since the principal had already established with the faculty that shared Performance Goals did not exist, the long term project would be, as he had already stated, to create that structure. But in the meantime, the teachers would begin by committing to measuring the learning in their own classrooms and reporting on it. For arts teachers, this usually meant constructing goals based on projects that focused on improving students' work quality. Critique, or what is referred to as "Respond" in the MN Arts Standards, became the focus of several teachers' student learning goals, with special emphasis on informational and formative peer and teacher critiques being done during the creative process.

MDE defines an **SLG** as a measurable, long-term student academic growth target that the teacher sets at the beginning of the year. SLGs are intended to demonstrate a teacher's impact on student learning within a specified interval of instruction. Several elements must appear in a teacher's SLG, including the standards the goal will align with, the assessments to be used to measure goal attainment; the time period covered by the goal, and expected student growth. All teachers (classroom and non-classroom) were required to set learning goals, select an assessment, establish mastery scores, and establish student start points.

According to the Model design, Class Goals are long-term academic achievement goals or learning objectives aimed at a *broad group of learners* within a given course. For students who need additional challenges or additional support regarding Class Goals, the teachers are expected to also identify Targeted Need Goals. These are long-term academic achievement goals or learning objectives aimed at a *specific group or groups of learners* within a teacher's class, course, or program who are achieving below expectations or exceeding them.

Teachers follow these steps.

- Choose quality assessments that are aligned to state standards (or national/professional standards).
- Choose assessments that have a high level of competence and confidence.
- Establish "mastery" scores.
- Determine student starting points.
- Determine available data, including beginning of course diagnostic tests (pre-tests).
- Analyze the make-up of the students in the class or course to be assessed according to low, medium, and high levels of preparedness.
- Set student-learning goals relative to the student's levels of preparedness. Given each student's starting points, where will that student end the course?
- Track progress and refine instruction.
- Review results and score.
- Determine to what degree student performance improved and whether the teacher fell short of, met, or exceeded his or her goal.

The quality of a Student Learning Goal is determined by these criteria:

Priority of Content: Is the assessment focused on the right content and skills? **Aligned** to state and/or national standards? **Aligned** to school and/or district level priorities (where applicable)?

Quality of Assessment: Does the assessment measure the identified content/skills of the course? Allow for stretch for under prepared as well as highly prepared students? Provide the specific data needed to determine if the objective was met? Can the assessment be compared across classrooms and schools?

Rigor of Goal: Is the mastery score aligned with expectations for academic growth or mastery within the interval of instruction? What data source(s) informed the mastery score? Is the mastery score rigorous, yet attainable for all students? Will students be “on track” and/or reduce gaps in achievement if they reach the mastery score?

With this information before them many teachers brought up red flags. While using the teacher evaluation rubric to set professional learning goals seemed important and doable to them, for a variety of reasons the Student Learning Goal work raised challenging questions.

Red flag # 1: The Model template for the SLG asked teachers to reference and/or establish “mastery scores” and the “data sources” that informed them. These were not available in every subject matter at the Arts High School and to the teachers the word “scores” implied testing as opposed to performance assessment. The math teachers were comfortable with the language in the SLG template, but most of the rest of the faculty, and especially the arts teachers, found heavy emphasis on improvement of scores foreign. All but the math and science teachers expressed general skepticism about the word “data” and questioned what it meant in the context of arts learning and project based learning, and further, they wondered, could they actually gather quantitative data that meant anything? Several expressed the opinion that the more any quantitative indicator is used during educational decision-making, the more likely that it will be used to distort and corrupt the educational processes it is intended to monitor. The tools for measuring a richness of learning quantitatively are not nearly as precise as the scores indicate.

Red Flag #2:

The arts teachers suspected that the SLG component of the Model tacitly was built thinking primarily about those disciplines in which high stakes tests are administered by the state, such as Language Arts, Mathematics, and to a lesser extent, Science. As these teachers saw it, the value of those tested subjects became elevated because they produced a great deal of quantitative data and because that data was used to judge the efficacy of schools in the state. Since Perpich Arts High School consists of only two grades, 11th and 12th, the school had no such test data other than in 11th grade mathematics. The only test administered to all students, the PSAT, is a test that cannot be used to show growth in the cadre to whom it’s administered as it is only taken once in the 11th grade.

Red Flag # 3: A common assessment assumes that many teachers teach the same course—for example, English 11-- and they come to agreement on how to commonly assess all the students who take English 11. At AHS one teacher teaches the equivalent of English 11. The model, the teachers felt, assumes a large school. Some of the teachers at AHS make up a department of one, and even in a department with two or three teachers, each teacher at AHS is the only teacher teaching any one specific course within their department. That is the nature of a small school. So, for example, Dance, and Design are departments with only one teacher. To them, what is a common assessment? And while Science has two teachers, one of them teaches Chemistry and Physics and the other Biology and Environmental Science. Again, a common assessment? Similarly, World Languages has one teacher for French, another for Spanish, although their field had a very developed framework for describing language acquisition, and they both used it and felt it could show growth toward common learning targets. Music, with it’s instrumental, vocal, composition, and theory classes, talked about naming common behaviors of a good musician that all would be able to teach toward, but they did not know when they could find time to build a curriculum and assessment that addressed such a thing.

Red Flag #4:

The word “mastery” itself, in the context of the arts, made teachers shudder. “Artists do not achieve mastery during high school,” a music teacher stated flatly. “What does that mean?” Discussion ensued that to be an artist means not to calculate and count but to grow gradually over a lifetime. One teacher referred to the writing on cognitive development of researcher Eliot Eisner. Eisner argues that the “complex and subtle” intellectual demands of the arts teach students to make good judgments about qualitative relationships. Unlike much of the curriculum in which correct answers and rules prevail, in the arts, it is judgment rather than rules that prevail. The arts teach students that problems can have more than one solution and that questions can have more than one answer.ⁱⁱⁱ

So, it was with trepidation the teachers began working in small groups by department or in clusters of arts teachers to attempt to draft meaningful student learning goals. They returned after an hour to share and receive support. Several were not able to come upon a plan that met the described criteria without becoming reductive about the learning they expected. The dance teacher said that the only way she could even approach an idea like mastery was to take an isolated skill—ballet vocabulary—as her student learning goal focus. Her program emphasized technique, but in service to a larger array of more dimensional learning within the dance discipline, including choreography and performance. Teachers were encouraged to schedule a time with the coach to work on their SLG plan and to have it finished to be approved by the principal by the last day before Winter Break.

That afternoon the staff used the AdvancED accreditation standards to conduct discussions about school-wide strengths and gaps evidenced by assessment data, and met with the same problem. There were no school-wide common assessments for AHS. Several teachers mention the common entry assessments given during the auditions to each art area however. They were identified as a possible practice to develop a baseline measure of arts learning. Other than that, common assessment was in place only in the sense that all AHS courses are taught by a single instructor, and the teachers knew that was not the intention of the model design.

Discussion turned toward the need to gather compelling evidence of learning that would flesh out and illustrate the story of how the school generates learning growth in all of the students in a meaningful way starting with the first review of them at their audition. The belief was that learning was occurring, but it wasn’t named publicly and explicitly, it wasn’t monitored in a cycle of improvement, and the school wasn’t providing clear expectations to all students. Graduation expectations were vague and implicit. The whole school conversation about assessment had begun. Solutions, as of fall 2015, are still under development.

January 2014: Launching the Professional Learning Communities

After winter break in mid-January the teachers met for another day of work on the Pilot. That afternoon the PLCs would meet again, with a clear set of dates and a plan for implementing an action research project based on either their IGDP goal or their SLG plan, or both. The principal, media specialist, and professional developer/coach, suggested ways that each of them could support the members of the five PLCs. Teachers were told that the three facilitators could provide learning resources; they would help each group and/or individuals in the group to learn new instructional and assessment strategies, to identify software or technology-assisted approaches, and they were also willing to model in the teachers’ classrooms and co-teach with them. The facilitators were also available to conduct classroom observations and give teachers support and feedback referenced to the *Performance Standards for Teacher Practice* rubric. The professional developer/coach and media specialist would help them with

documenting their efforts so that all teachers, with priority given to those ten of the 30 teachers being evaluated that year, had support with meeting the reporting expectations that were part of the Pilot process.

The leaders emphasized that every teacher would be ready for the Rubric. A complete coaching cycle included a pre-observation meeting, the observation, and a post-observation debrief. Teachers wondered how other schools manage to get teachers out of the classroom to do peer observation cycles with their colleagues. The principal reminded them that it was an option for them, too, and he would support finding coverage if they chose to do peer observations, although they were optional. He asked teachers to ask for what they needed from each of the three facilitators and a procedure was established to do that.

When the PLCs met that afternoon the teachers were reminded that the PLC provides professional development designed to focus to their needs. It uses the wisdom of the cohort— not just “outside expert” knowledge—as the primary means of learning. The group could decide on actions they would take together and individually. For example, they could ask the media specialist to teach or coach them on a particular software apps/tech-assisted classroom practices. They could work through assessment planning, lesson design issues, and alignment of learning goals with the professional developer/coach. After learning a new method or strategy each teacher would make what was called a mini-action plan to try one of their new methods with students and collect evidence of learning improvement—or not. Later in the cycle, they would report back to their PLC and begin the cycle again:

Rubric Focus	Themes and Questions	Discipline/Member
Domain 1	How do we align, communicate clear learning targets, and assess them; how do we differentiate for learners at high and low levels of preparation?	Media Arts/N Art History/ C Social Studies/J Chemistry/B
Domains 1, 2, 3	How can we integrate media and technology to improve instruction and assessment, particularly performance assessment?	Math/E; Science/W English Language Arts/K Dance/M Theater/B French/T Spanish/E Literary Arts/S Social Studies/B
Domain 1	How do we create constructivist curriculum pathways? What is “Perpichness”—that value AHS adds that goes beyond what’s offered by other arts and non-arts schools?	Visual Arts/C Theater/ BB
Domain 2	Classroom Environment; how do we engage reluctant learners. How do we manage project-based learning?	Visual Arts/S ArtScience/T Math/G
Domains 1, 2, 3	How do we design our courses to create more student ownership of learning? How do we build into our course design the gradual release of responsibility from teachers to students?	English Language Arts/T English Language Arts/SY Visual Arts/P Vocal Music/J Music Composition/ J Instrumental Music/J Media Arts/A

January Check-In with MDE and the other Pilot Sites

The MDE Pilot staff met with the Model pilot sites in January. They clarified that measuring student engagement beyond what was observable in the classroom would be done by means of a student survey developed with the by Minnesota stakeholders with the Youth Truth Survey organization. Evidence of teacher effectiveness at engaging learners would largely be based on students' input. Each school piloting the Student Engagement component of the Model would work with YouthTruth to develop a sampling plan using their schedule and classroom rosters. Parent consent letters were to be obtained per the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The principal of each school could determine which teachers would receive survey data.

A Value-Added measure ascribes additional points to teachers whose students improve their test scores beyond a predicted level. The Value-Added Measure that was built into the Pilot version of the Model has since changed, but because AHS had no standardized testing data, the school did not participate in that component. After describing the spring evaluator training that would occur in March, the Pilot staff member asked the schools what was one strength of the Model that they would share with the work group. AHS reported that the teachers were happy to have the opportunity to collaborate with each other and talk about their practice. They were relieved to meet in collegial meetings that focused on teaching in addition to their meetings for managing the school and year.

When asked for a suggested revision or area of further study, the principal repeated the statement of the dance teacher about the complexity of the Model ("so many moving parts") and the desire voiced by teachers that it be streamlined. As for advice they would give to other districts as they implement this or other Models? Be prepared for the impact on the principal, several mentioned, if he or she is the summative evaluator. The process takes a great deal of time if it's done well. And the clerical staff is also impacted by the additional work to accommodate surveys and observation meetings.

February: The Student Engagement Survey

At their February professional development meeting teachers received a copy of the student engagement survey questions. Since the Student Engagement component is one of three summative evaluation components, teachers asked about whether the survey would be the sole measure of student engagement. The principal assured them that as the summative evaluator, he would collect additional evidence of student engagement via his observations. He told them that they could also create a portfolio of evidence to share with him, but a portfolio was entirely optional. He was happy to report that all teachers had completed an individual growth and development plan and a student learning goal project plan.

The principal reminded the teachers that they had reached the midpoint of the pilot and he assured the teachers that they had met all of the expectations for the first semester. He congratulated them for beginning the investigation into "shared performance goals." He also praised the PLCs that had been instituted to support teachers in the development of their goals and assessments.

Grades 6-12 Student Perception Survey of Student Engagement—Pilot Draft

Students respond to each item using a truth scale.

Totally Untrue Mostly Untrue Somewhat True Mostly True Totally True

1. Our class stays busy and does not waste time.
2. Students know what they are expected to do and learn in this class.
3. This teacher treats students in this class with respect.
4. Students in this class treat the teacher with respect.
5. In this class, students help each other learn.
6. This teacher encourages students to keep trying even if the work gets hard.
7. This teacher gives me assignments that help me better understand the subject.
8. This teacher asks questions to be sure we understand the lesson.
9. In this class, I learn a lot almost every day.
10. The work that I do for this class makes me really think.
11. This teacher encourages me to use my thinking skills, not just memorize things.
12. This teacher has high expectations for me.
13. In this class, the teacher expects our full effort.
14. This teacher really cares about me.
15. This teacher tries to be fair.
16. This teacher accepts me for who I am.
17. This teacher makes an effort to understand what my life is like outside of school.
18. This teacher makes class enjoyable most of the time.
19. This teacher connects what I'm learning in class with life outside this classroom.
20. This teacher makes me want to learn more.

February through May: PLCs go through an action research cycle

During the second semester most AHS teachers conscientiously worked to track student progress and refine instruction. During their PLCs they looked at each other's projects, supported their fellow teachers, examined student results, and talked about next instructional steps. A few revised their goals after conversations about the scale of their proposed changes in practice.

Of the nine teachers who focused their PLC work on integrating instructional technology to improve student learning and teacher practice, three projects illustrate the range of results stemming from the first year of Pilot work. One project in particular did not achieve the desired impact on student learning, but did result in increased knowledge for both the teacher implementing the project and everyone involved in the PLC. In that project the literary arts teachers wanted to use an electronic platform for students to provide feedback on each other's writing. Although students did complete the teacher's assigned tasks, the impact on student learning was not what was expected. The use of technology to provide peer feedback reduced the quality of feedback and had a negative impact on community building with the class. The teacher decided to return to written peer feedback delivered through in-person conferencing. She engaged her fellow PLC members in rich dialogue on the limitations and unexpectedly negative impacts of technology on interpersonal dynamics.

The French teacher's IGDP focused on increasing student proficiency in written language production by creating an electronic discussion board. Students used this platform to respond to teacher prompts and to comment on each other's responses. There were difficulties in finding an appropriate no-cost platform, so the teacher adapted a discussion board tool intended for other purposes to meet her needs. The inadequacies of the tool yielded many frustrations and limitations. The teacher decided to attempt the project again in the following PLC cycle using a different tool.

The most successful project within the technology PLC involved three teachers—dance, theater and public speaking—who sought to improve student self-reflection practices which they hoped would lead

to higher quality peer and teacher feedback. They decided to videotape student performance as part of a formative assessment process. The material taped differed in each case, as did the specifics of what and how peer feedback was delivered. However, there was considerable overlap in the desired student learning outcomes. The trio also developed a common approach to housing and sharing videos. The three teachers were able to learn from each other's projects, including both the mechanics of using technology tools and the process of student self-reflection and peer feedback. The collaborative learning that took place among the teachers during other professional development sessions further enriched this already meaningful work, and the project was viewed as a success in each case. Each teacher elected to continue the work in the following PLC cycle, two using the same technology and one electing to find a different tool to simplify the process for herself and her students.

In the PLC that focused on increasing student achievement by improving teacher planning, instruction, and assessment, several projects caused teachers to consider new approaches. The music teachers responsible for the ensemble program at AHS undertook the most significant of these in terms of fomenting change. These two were struggling with how to assess learning in their ensemble classes. With the assistance of the professional developer/coach they located and eventually adapted an ensemble assessment method developed in the Pittsburgh Public Schools in a collaboration called Arts Propel completed during the 1980s with Harvard Project Zero and the College Board. After adapting it slightly, the two teachers tried to use the method with their ensemble groups. The tool required students to write and discuss their reflections on their own playing based on a rehearsal recording. They then also wrote about the whole group's rendition of the piece. They were to use criteria such as dynamics, rhythm, texture, tone, entrances and exits, and style elements. What the project uncovered was that the school's ensemble curriculum did not adequately prepare the students to analyze using the musical criteria. At first one of the teachers called the project a failure, but subsequently she began revising the music theory curriculum to more explicitly teach the desired qualities of musical performance and to allow the students to practice reflection using those lenses.

April: Summative Evaluator Training in Wabasha

A group of summative evaluators convened for a day in Wabasha, Minnesota, to learn more about scoring using the rubric. The emphasis was on using evidence to determine how a teacher scored on the Model rubric and how to come up with component ratings.

May 27: Interpreting Student Feedback Survey Results

By their May professional development day, the AHS results on the survey on student engagement were back. They moved to the front of the agenda. The principal told the gathered teachers that to make meaning of the student engagement survey results they would need to see them in context. The survey items had been developed to align with the definitions used in the MDE Model for behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement, affective engagement, and academic engagement. The questions were written so that each sought a positive rating.

A percentile scoring method was used based on how student perceptions from the Arts High School compared to other secondary schools across the country. The purpose of the survey was not to rank teachers, the principal said. Percentiles were offered only as one of several ways to examine the findings. The principal assured teachers that percentiles were not being used for summative evaluation. The sample size, also raised caution. The number of teachers was tiny, and for that reason, teachers were advised not to make big distinctions between small differences. Since the survey was new and being piloted, MDE did not have enough data to statistically determine a "significant difference" among teacher's scores. They were only able to look for trends and outliers.

A summary measure of all of the ratings provided an overview of AHS results. The math teachers pointed out that because it was based on many more student ratings, it also provided a more reliable overall index. “Generally, what do students think about us?” the principal asked. “You should feel good!” Teachers were pleased at the quantity of positive responses. The principal asked the faculty to think about whether action was indicated by the survey results. “Can we identify strengths and opportunities for growth,” he asked.

June 9: End of year conversations about the Pilot

End-of-year conversations were reflective and far-reaching. The first occurred among teachers as they sat within their PLC. Each teacher wrote a required final reflection and then reviewed it with a peer. The ten teachers being summatively evaluated also held these reflective conversations with the principal. Preparation included writing reflective reports followed by sharing the contemplation with a peer or peers.

In going into this final professional development session, teachers were reminded again to see the year’s work on the Pilot and the school’s accreditation as part of a continuous improvement process that they would take up again when school resumed in the fall. They could keep their pilot year IGDP goal if they wished, or revise it to reflect what they’d accomplished. They were to think about those next steps, including any changes they were considering to their Individual Growth and Development Plan goals, and share their thinking with their peers, coach, or the principal. Teachers received a planning guide that included guiding reflective questions for that purpose.

Regarding individualized results from the student survey, teachers could choose to share them with peers in order to reflect on their results or not; it was up to the individual teacher. For those being evaluated, at the summative conference, both teachers and the principal needed to prepare an initial response to the question, “If you were to evaluate [yourself/this teacher] based on evidence from the student survey, what performance rating would you give?” At the conference, teachers were told that they would discuss each of their own initial ratings and rationale. Ideally, teachers and evaluators would be able to agree on a rating. However, it would be the evaluator’s role to determine the final rating.

A year prior most AHS teachers had been observed and evaluated by the previous principal without a common rubric. There had been discussion and concern among the teachers about whether any evaluator would have the breadth and depth of disciplinary understanding of content and processes in each of their disciplines. This concern was highest in the arts areas, where work on projects over time depended on the students’ understanding of the artistic process and student growth in applying it. Teachers questioned whether any evaluator had the disciplinary knowledge and the understanding of process learning cycles necessary to evaluate their teaching of high-level classes in dance, design, math, science, and music, among others. Trust was much discussed. The Pilot, they noted, offered a more transparent process with clearer descriptions of pedagogical behavior than they had had previously, a step in the right direction. They also mentioned how the much-repeated emphasis on continuous improvement by the new principal and the professional developer/coach mitigated fear of an evaluation becoming a tool for what one of the teachers dubbed, “Gotcha!”

June 10: Evaluating the Pilot at the Perpich Arts High School

On the final day of the Pilot, the whole faculty met to reflect using a tool called the Tuning Protocol. This reflection structure led by a facilitator creates discourse within the whole group. All results are recorded in writing so the school community can see them and check for accuracy, as they are collected.

The process begins with asking each person to contribute warm feedback about the Pilot. Teachers were asked to praise the aspects of the Teacher Evaluation Pilot that had real value for them as professionals; they were then invited to suggest how aspects of the model might be improved.

Summary:

(PLC leaders mentioned are the PERPICH CENTER media specialist, and the professional developer/coach. The summative evaluator is the principal.)

The Model Overall

The teachers at the Arts High School, the professional developer/coach, and the principal/summative evaluator found the Model understandable, usable with some modifications, and effective for some but not all of the processes of teacher evaluation. Teachers reported satisfaction that they received a small stipend as incentive and reward for hard work. “That shows respect for us as professionals,” one explained. They felt grateful that the experience did not feel punitive.

Generally, teachers reported feeling positive about the connectivity and community the model fostered within the building. The Pilot structures supported conversations by teachers across disciplines; they especially valued the process’s power to increase understanding among arts and non-arts teachers. New teachers reported that the work as a staff during the Pilot accelerated their collegial connections with their more veteran colleagues. They were grateful that there were adaptations that the principal was able to make to customize and streamline Pilot elements such as Points of Contact. They appreciated having a professional developer/coach who also worked to translate and winnow the required work. Teachers, while they felt overwhelmed by the complexity of the model, found a trade off in that they valued how the model evaluated them using multiple snapshots and measures; this gave them confidence that the summative evaluator, their principal, was interested in evidence of good practice on many dimensions and not coming in to observe them looking for a single story of good teaching.

To improve the process the teachers felt that training and Implementation should have taken more time and been staged more gradually so they could do each component well. “We need to look at the administration of the Model. It shouldn’t be, ‘You people do this, see you in May.’ This worked because at AHS because we did things in stages, and it would be good if the state could incorporate a phase-in plan within the Model itself. Preparation for us to do the Pilot felt off the cuff; that needed to be more thoughtful process.” One teacher complained, “If you are given a 100-page handbook describing bureaucratic documents and red tape to meet expectations, then you will be guaranteed that no teacher will take the time to read it, not because it isn’t for a good cause, but because teaching everyday has to be the priority.”

Additional ongoing support and infrastructure was needed for effective implementation. Training and ongoing support from MDE was not completely sufficient, although it did support the principal/summative evaluator and the professional developer/coach so they could then use the technical assistance they had received in their support of the staff. The school used its agency’s budget to contract for the support of a professional developer /coach. Although teachers felt supported, a few still

commented in the end of year reflection that they feared in the future having less time and less support to meet all the expectations.

Implementation of all aspects of the model required a system for coordinating peer review and observation schedules plus additional systems for maintaining communication, documentation, analysis, and data storage. Those who participated in the Pilot noted how it taxed the counselor and the student records coordinator regarding the engagement survey and the administrative specialist for the principal for teacher scheduling, communications, and coordination. In addition, the Pilot strained the antiquated instructional technology system at the school. This system also came under the notice of the AdvanceEd accreditation team, which required that a technology improvement plan for AHS be created before the next accreditation cycle.

Teacher Practice

Teachers were fairly unanimous that the Model's rubric contributed to teachers' development and evaluation but were far less enthusiastic about unwieldy forms. They were most positive about working together in PLCs. Some continued to worry about being scored on a high stakes evaluation by a summative evaluator who had little knowledge or experience with their discipline.

- I really valued PLC. PLC was great; it's wonderful to bounce items off of colleagues; I learned how to do something in technology and it was fun. Not only did I learn something, but also it was helpful to students.
- This professional development was something classroom-centered, which is what we really care about; we had very accessible help with the PERPICH CENTER media specialist and the professional developer, and we created practical knowledge together.
- PLC was helpful. Better technology has been on my weakness list for over 20 years. I learned something transferable from other teachers, too. We worked as a group. Learning was transferable across morning and afternoon classes (arts and academics). The PERPICH CENTER media specialist was great. PLC brought us to deep levels of discussion on teaching and assessment across curriculums.
- I was under-confident with technology so I enjoyed one on one with The PERPICH CENTER media specialist. PLC was a good starting point and as a result I've signed up for things at TIES (an education technology collaborative of 49 Minnesota school districts that offers classes for teachers and software solutions for schools). I liked working in small groups. I have ideas for next year.
- I liked the conversations with my fellow educators: I learned from my PLC partner, an art teacher, and I'll be reading some of his books on educational philosophy, learning how other structured programs work; I liked the freedom to determine my own PLC focus from among a rubric of choices. The principal's flexibility, the coaching, and the simplification of peer contact meetings really were helpful.
- PLC was enjoyable as was having the PERPICH CENTER media specialist as a leader. I looked forward to PLC meetings and this very hands-on approach to tech integration, instruction, support, and practice.

The teachers' major concern for continuing PLCs was being able to find common times for the members of the group to meet outside of four PLC meetings each year scheduled during time set aside for professional development. "It was challenging to find common meeting times," one explained. Another caution arose regarding the idea of teachers becoming "peer coaches" without enough training. "The August MDE training to make us "peer coaches" was not good, and could not possibly prepare us to be peer coaches for each other. It was a good thing we dropped peer coaching when the new principal

came on board in favor of having a dedicated coach and informal coaching through PLCs. How much training would we need to be effective and good at it?" one teacher asked before answering herself. "A lot more than was offered. If we had gone ahead with so little training for peer coaches, the results could have been disastrous. I'm interested in peer coaching and I wonder, realistically, what that would look like? How much training would you have to have to not to hurt anyone by giving feedback poorly?" The teachers agreed that professional development/coaching should continue to be employed to help PLCs into the future.

Because AHS is small and there are only one or two teachers in each discipline, several teachers voiced a wish that there could be funds to hire substitute teachers so they could visit other schools. "At my other school," one told her colleagues, "we had funds so that you can go into another discipline or go to a different school to watch other teachers in your discipline teach or run their classroom; I incorporate things into my own teaching that I've learned from seeing others."

The teachers appreciated the Pilot's clear expectations and the shared expectation that each was to work on an individual growth plan with support, whether they were being evaluated that year or not. "It was very helpful having the framework for evaluation in advance (domains with indicators); this was useful for reflection. It is so important to have time for reflection," a teacher commented. "And I will have a chance to practice this way of working before I'm evaluated formally. That brings the fear factor way down."

New teachers mentioned that they felt particularly well supported in the Pilot, because everyone was going through a similar evaluation process and the focus on growth was shared across the entire faculty. "One positive part was structural," one said. "This project was integrated with our regular professional development meetings; we had time to do what we needed to do. It was immediately valuable, and I looked forward to it. I received valuable information and it will make a difference next year."

About half of the teachers focused on an IGDP goal related to increasing their efficacy using technology as part of their instruction. "Goal-setting was worthwhile and I was very pleased that technology was a focus area for me. I went through the process, got steps to follow to implement a new strategy, and though I semi-failed because I ran out of time, I had a positive feeling. . . . [Instead of feeling punitive] this was collaborative and the process recognized that we have a lot to give."

Another said, "My individual growth plan – an interdisciplinary project I designed and taught with two other teachers—resulted in great professional growth; getting observational feedback from an outsider, the professional developer, was also really helpful." Others emphasized the importance of separating the coach and evaluator roles so that they felt judgment of their work was deferred and they were freer to take risks trying new instructional strategies.

"The separation of coach and evaluator roles should be replicated statewide because it is so supportive; I was grateful for the professional developer's coaching, accessibility, assurances of being on right track. I like having another professional in my room," a teacher commented. Another said, "The work with the professional developer/coach has been great. She was available when I asked her and I had support when I needed it. The day she came in to work with my students and co-teach a new strategy with me was really nice. We have the right mentor here."

The downside of the IGDP element of the Pilot for the teachers was the initial rush to write it: "We had a ridiculously small amount of time to set up student and teacher goals (The MDE trainer's workshop in

August). That first attempt was done with a time constraint that set it up to be meaningless. There was too small an amount of time to learn the rubric, self-assess, and actually write an IGDP. When the MDE trainer was here he said he would go away for half an hour and when he got back we should have it done. This felt pretend, and that was about what we ended up doing. There was a disconnect then, but later we were given more time and support.”

Student Engagement

Some teachers found value in using the survey as student engagement evidence, while others felt it wasn't sensitive enough in its implementation to account for classes that had just started that week. (It was given at the start of a semester.) One teacher said, “I loved getting the results from the student survey. It reinforced areas I was doing well and pinpointed what I need to improve.” Some teachers followed up with the students to clarify the information that they received. Suggestions were made to improve the tool:

- The student survey would be more helpful if student counts were included in individual reports.
- Administration of student survey connected to the scheduling program we use did not work for music. The results had no value because the semester had just begun and the students had not worked with the teacher more than a few class sessions. The survey process cannot assume teachers have sections of the same class all day long.
- Teachers felt that the student survey should include some open-ended questions or have a place for students to add comments. Teachers also felt that their high school-aged students had misinterpreted one of the questions. “The respect questions should have more to do with the idea of safety as part of classroom environment, less emphasis on liking the teacher, and more focus on that classroom as a space for learning,” a teacher commented.

Student Learning Goals

The most difficult aspect of the model for the teachers was finding a way for them as project-based teachers, especially in the arts, to define student-learning goals. Looking at the terminology in the Student Learning Goal handbook they received, they asked, “What is a ‘score’ in the arts classroom? What does it look like, and how is it defined and obtained? How is it validated, given the qualitative nature of arts learning?” There were many conversations throughout the year about what the faculty should accept as evidence that students have attained the desired understandings and proficiencies. Regarding proficiency itself, they railed at the terminology “mastery.” Individual teachers in most disciplines were confounded. Mathematics teachers were the most comfortable. World language teachers had a nationally designed rubric for language acquisition that they felt comfortable using, and it used the term “proficient.” Science and social studies could determine mastery of facts using test scores, but had more trouble thinking about what mastery looked like in a project. A large percentage of the faculty felt the biggest disconnect with the Pilot was over the SLG.

Additionally, they found they could not align the SLG process with district or building curriculum, assessment, or staff development work because there had not been a coherent school improvement plan regarding assessment at AHS for more than a decade. Teachers identified early in the year that they worked in “silos” and were doing the best they could as individuals when it came to assessing student learning growth, but had no real idea of how coherently they were measuring student learning as a school.

Difficulties also arose when trying to define student starting-points (levels of preparedness) as required in the SLG goal-setting form and process. The faculty found a general rubric from the Teaching for

Understanding Project at Project Zero that they could agree upon and adapted it; it describes levels of accomplishment on learning targets using the terms **Naïve**, **Novice**, **Apprentice**, and **Journeyman**. **Naïve** students had no prior engagement with the material. **Novice** students could engage the concepts or skills using rote and ritual. **Apprentices**, given support, evidenced higher-level thinking about the concept and its application. **Journeyman** thought and applied the knowledge and skills flexibly, both critically and creatively, as an independent practitioner.

Even after coming to this agreement, teachers struggled as their learning goals were being written to determine appropriate measures of student growth. One solution they thought about was gathering entry point evidence from the audition process used as part of the arts high school admission application. There was enthusiasm for this idea, but work on it was tabled and not revisited during the Pilot year.

The first order of business would be to figure out the varieties of assessments that were in use throughout the school and to analyze their effectiveness. Teachers and teams found they could make no assurance that assessment data was reliable or consistently collected, let alone germane to the disciplines that did not lend themselves to quantitative testing. Although the teachers, teams, and evaluator had many conversations to interpret the student learning goal process and found value in those conversations, they were frustrated to have so few answers.

They could agree that to be done well the student learning goal-setting process would require: 1) That performances of understanding could be assessments; 2) that they would need to have clear, public criteria that are closely related to the standards and the learning targets in their courses; 3) that students would need opportunities to receive feedback on their work in progress and after performances, thus enabling them to use the feedback to improve their work; and 4) all of this would need to be mapped to answer their questions.

One teacher summed up their concerns: “When we worked on the accreditation it was asked of us, what is the purpose of our school? What are the things we say we teach kids? What do they leave here knowing and doing in their lives as artists and citizens because of this place? How can we really measure that or collect evidence that shows we are meeting our ideals and goals for them? We have to build an assessment structure we can all agree upon. Can we line these needs up with next year’s professional development and PLCs?”

Update: 2014-15, when the calendar for professional development and the school improvement plan needed for accreditation began to take shape, actions steps included language very similar to the Model:

- Determine outcomes desired of every AHS graduate;
- Choose or develop assessments (evidence of learning) and establish naïve, novice, apprentice, and journeyman levels;
- Pre-assess students to determine preparedness, perhaps by adapting the admissions assessments used to audition for the school;
- Set public student learning - targets (class and targeted need);
- Assess, gathering evidence of learning;
- Analyze evidence gathered;
- And adjust instruction.

ⁱ http://www.mcae.k12.mn.us/index.php?section=about_overview Retrieved June 23, 2015

ⁱⁱ <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/EdExc/EducEval/TeachEval/index.html> Retrieved June 23, 2015

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SOURCE: Eisner, E. (2002). *The Arts and the Creation of Mind*, In Chapter 4, What the Arts Teach and How It Shows. (pp. 70-92). Yale University Press. Available from NAEA Publications. NAEA grants reprint permission for this excerpt from Ten Lessons with proper acknowledgment of its source and NAEA.

- See more at: <http://www.arteducators.org/advocacy/10-lessons-the-arts-teach#sthash.er8cOTL5.dC3KtonU.dpuf>