SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Office of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment
100 Maple Avenue, Shrewsbury, MA 01545
Phone: 508-841-8403 Fax: 508-841-8661

Amy Clouter, Assistant Superintendent

An Update on District Goals

Presented to the School Committee

November 29, 2017

Introduction

On April 8, 2015, the School Committee unanimously approved two-year district goals. These goals were linked to our strategic priorities and designed to fuel the work of two important groups- students and staff. Accordingly, our goals were delineated in two broad categories:

- Professional practice goals
- Student learning goals

For the past two years, our Professional Practice goals have shaped the work of teachers and teams at all levels across the district. Last Spring Mrs. Banios, Shrewsbury's former Assistant Superintendent, shared several reports detailing progress on these priorities. A summary of her findings can be found on the district website, here: http://schools.shrewsburyma.gov/district/Strategic-Planning-Assessment.cfm

Background Information

This past spring a number of recommendations were included within each strategic priority report to the School Committee. What follows is a summary of the suggestions shared by Mrs. Banios and the educators that joined her for the strategic priority presentations.

Summary of Recommendations

Engage & Challenge All Students

- Together with parents and other stakeholders, develop a common vision for PBL education in SPS by revisiting the question of what a successful graduate should know and be able to do.
- Explore providing dedicated resources, primarily in the form of personnel, that would facilitate connections to the community.
- Rethink school structures. Collect data about the degree to which areas in the curriculum where all students have access to PBL and assess how well current structures and schedules serve our collective student body.

Enhance Learning Through Technology

- Sustain efforts to integrate technology into routine instruction.
- Continue to emphasize digital citizenship and responsible use of devices.
- Explore models of technology integration at the Elementary level, specifically for students in grades PreK-3.

Promote Health & Wellness

- Continue current Health and Physical Education education efforts in our classrooms and the community
- Continue to support SCAPE and its efforts to raise awareness about substance abuse and prevention.
- Address growing concerns about student mental and behavioral health.

Increase Value to the Community

- Maintain our reputation as a high performing school district and explore ways to expand achievement opportunities.
- Continue to promote community service.
- Prepare students to be successful with the next generation of state assessments.

These recommendations are pertinent to the ongoing strategic planning currently underway. This remainder of this report seeks to provide information about the district's efforts to meet targets for Student Learning goals. These goals targeted student achievement in two distinct content areas, Writing and Math:

- In spring 2017, the number of students meeting the proficiency benchmark on Pre-K-12 common writing assessments will increase by at least 5% in each grade level compared with the baseline established in 2016.

- In spring 2017, the number of students meeting the proficiency benchmark on Pre-K-12 common math assessments will increase by at least 5% in each grade level compared with the baseline established in 2016.

This update on student progress will also inform our efforts at continuous improvement in a similar way.

Update on Student Learning Goals

Overview

In his book Learning by Doing, Rick DuFour described teacher teams that use data in this way as 'professional learning communities' or PLCs. His word for the most skillful of these teams was "accountable". Accountable teams:

- Use data to inform instruction
- Calibrate their scoring to make sure assessments are fair
- Administer assessments consistently across grades and levels
- Monitor student progress and adjust instruction accordingly

Shrewsbury has used the PLC model to drive improvement for some time, and it's clear that using data is part of the district's culture at each level. At the same time, educators have used data in different ways at each level, and it's clear that we have work to do to align our efforts. One of the challenges of analyzing district data is that in some cases the baseline was not recorded. At some levels the targets were not clearly articulated. Thus it's difficult to say whether we have met the 5% target.

Writing

In the fall of 2012, teachers began implementing the Shrewsbury Writing Project. Shortly thereafter, educator teams across the district adopted common assignments to assess writing. Teachers used professional development and department meeting time to create and discuss assessment results. Moreover, at every level educators used common rubrics to assess student progress, reflect on the data with colleagues, and to collaborate with colleagues to inform or adjust their instruction.

Data was collected in consistent ways at the Elementary level. This is a snapshot of the tracking document used to measure student progress by trimester in Grade 1, for example:

As you can see, each piece was scored for a number of writing components:

- Development of ideas
- Organization
- Clarity and
- Use of language conventions

Student Name	Dev. of ideas	Org.	Clar. of Lang.	Total	Lang. and Conv.
	1	1	1	3	1
	2	1	1	4	1
	1	1	1	3	2
	2	2	2	6	2
	2	1	2	5	1
	2	1	1	4	1
	2	2	1	5	2
	1	1	1	3	1
	1	1	1	3	1
	2	2	1	5	1
	2	1	1	4	1
	1	1	1	3	1
	1	1	1	3	1
	1	1	2	4	2
	1	1	1	3	2
	1	1	2	4	1
	1	1	1	0	1
	2	2	1	5	2

What you can't see is that each teacher's scores are visible to the whole team by tab. This helps teachers to compare results with an eye towards analyzing trends and looking for effectiveness. The impromptu sharing that follows group discussions helps teams to revise lesson plans, share methodology and resources and even group kids for follow up.

Finally, the process for entering and analyzing data is consistent across the Elementary level. This means that it's possible to look at student performance across schools as well.

What do the results show us? Scores and rates of student progress vary by grade. Overall students consistently demonstrate growth from Trimester 1 to Trimester 3 within a given year. For example, 15% of Floral Street students in second grade scored in the Proficient range in Trimester 1. By Trimester 3, 66% of students were working at this level. However, it's not possible to accurately compare results from one year to the next because from year to year collection efforts were inconsistent. In some cases the variances reflect deliberate changes in scoring. In others calculating overall results is difficult because not all teachers entered their scores in the same ways. Similar challenges persist with data collection efforts at the secondary level, for different reasons.

At the middle level, teachers elected to use MCAS data as a primary tool for data analysis since students are tested in this way each year. Although this approach makes sense, the changes in the test itself makes assessing growth impossible. On the other hand, item analysis of the different kinds of writing students are asked to do revealed helpful trends.

Middle School Results, 2017:

	5th	6th	7th	8th
Expository - Lit. Analysis	52%	53%	53%	56%
Narrative	64%	54%	70%	65%
Expository - Informational	64%	51%	53%	60%

Overall our middle school students are scoring between 8-14 percentile points above state average, which is in line with most of where students scored on most items. Students in grades five and six had some of the lower scores overall, yet students in these grade levels scored over 10 percentage points higher than the state on all three writing tasks.

Language use and conventions scores showed as a strength across the board. Eighth graders posted the highest scores for this element, with 70% of students scoring in the Proficient range in this area in all types of writing. Idea development scores lag behind, and honing in on this area is a good goal.

At Shrewsbury High School teachers in all departments worked to include Writing assessments in their practice. Initial Writing data was recorded by the students themselves. Over the course of the two years teachers joined the effort; they also adjusted how data was collected and used. Over time a change in guidance from the state that deemphasized the importance of using 'district determined measures' (DDMs) led to a lack of clarity about expectations for data collection. It's important to note however that many teachers collect and individually analyze data to guide instruction in their classrooms.

Mathematics

Data discussions at the Elementary level are informed by student work on two different problems. As with Writing, teachers at the Elementary level enter Math data in consistent ways. Moreover, at this level teachers across the district look at scores from previous years as guides to anticipate aspects of the curriculum where most students struggle.

This is a picture of what those sheets look like for a typical team:

	Problem #1			
	Acc.	Strat.	Mod.	Total
Teacher A	1.63	1.50	2.19	5.31
Teacher B	1.78	1.17	1.72	4.67
Teacher C	2.41	1.53	1.35	5.29
Teacher D	1.71	1.24	1.76	4.71
	1.88	1.36	1.76	4.99

Problem #1			
Acc.	Strat.	Mod.	Total
2.89	3.37	3.37	9.63
2.63	2.75	2.94	8.31
2.87	2.67	2.47	8.00
3.00	2.89	2.83	8.72
2.85	2.92	2.90	8.67

Again, the good news is that students typically demonstrate considerable progress within a given year. Further, anecdotal reports suggest that successive training in problem solving techniques have helped students in all grades to improve their ability to solve complex problems. That said, while student scores help to inform instruction, inconsistency in data entry over time made it difficult to make reliable interpretations of the results at this time.

In grades 5 and 6 the only comprehensive grade level data at hand comes from MCAS and PARCC. As noted above changes in the test itself make tracking student growth difficult. In grade 5, educators have developed a common rubric and problem-solving tasks to promote modeling and communication, but the data that's resulted is inconclusive because the tasks still under development. Fortunately we will have an opportunity to establish baseline data for these tasks in spring 2018.

So how can we look at student work in Math? A snapshot of student work gives us some insights. Unit assessment data for one module, "Comparing Bits & Pieces" allows us to look at data from November of each year in Grade 6:

- In 2015-16 87% of students who took the assessment scored 3 or better.
- In 2016-17 84% of students who took the assessment scored 3 or better

In grades 7 and 8, spring benchmark assessments allow us to compare results from May of each year in Grade 7:

- In 2015-2016 28% of students who took the spring benchmark scored 80% or better (Median score = 63%)
- In 2016-17 40% of students who took the spring benchmark scored 80% or better (Median score = 70%)

Here are the results for Grade 8:

- In 2015-16 52% of students who took the spring benchmark scored 80% or better (Median score = 80%)
- In 2016-17 48% of students who took the spring benchmark scored 80% or better (Median score = 78%)

Again, now that more consistent data collection methods are in place, in the future looking at rates of achievement over time will be easier.

Conclusion

To assess comes from the Latin word *assidere* which means 'to sit by'. Although teachers are not often able to observe every student individually, student work affords teachers a unique opportunity to assess both student understanding and skill. However, assessment data is only useful when it's used. In order to realize the full benefit of the information our educators are gathering, we all need to do a better job of supporting teams, particularly when they work with data. Administrators and teachers alike must look at exemplars together with the goal of gleaning what they tell us about student strengths and needs. Most importantly, educators must collaborate more consistently within and across levels with the purpose of responding to the student needs that emerge from these discussions.

Going forward, I highly recommend that we reexamine our data practices to ensure that the assessment data we collect is measureable and meaningful. In places where teams analyze assessment results consistently, we must check for consistency of practice. Finally, it's imperative that we look at student achievement as children transition from one level to the next as key places to focus future efforts.