

Attachment #5: Sample Finding

Sample Finding from Southbridge Public Schools District Review Report

The district has in place many of the systems and processes needed to establish strong instructional practice.

Principals, members of the curriculum team, and the special education director share responsibility for promoting and monitoring effective instructional practice. To guide instruction, the district has established standards-based benchmarks in ELA and mathematics. With the MCAS and Galileo assessments, administrators and teachers have the tools to determine instructional needs as measured against the benchmarks. At the beginning of each school year, the district undertakes a thorough analysis of summative MCAS results. Following that analysis, each school develops principal, teacher, and student action plans to address the instructional weaknesses ascertained through the analysis. Beginning with the 2009-2010 school year and using test items from Galileo, each classroom in the school then administers formative assessments three times per year to determine the extent of student progress toward mastery of the benchmarks.

Additional factors enable the adoption of effective classroom practice. Principals have allocated ample time for ELA and mathematics instruction. Students in kindergarten through grade 5 have 90-minute blocks of instruction in ELA and mathematics. At the middle and high schools this time is reduced to 64 and 60 minutes respectively, as determined by the length of a class period. In addition, however, at-risk students at the middle school have additional ELA and mathematics “Safety Net” classes, and at the high school every 10th grader takes both an ELA and a mathematics seminar focused on MCAS preparation. In some cases, however, pull-out instruction for Title I, special education, and LEP students compromises students’ access to teachers with strong content backgrounds. As a result, while the time allocations are sufficient, effective use of this available time is not always clear.

The district also provides ample professional development time for teachers to learn about promising instructional practices. A significant amount of professional development time has been devoted to introducing teachers to a range of instructional strategies. The Collins Writing Program is an example of an instructional program successfully implemented. Teachers across content areas received professional development in the program, and administrators monitored classrooms for evidence of its use. Writing across the content areas is the district’s instructional focus for the 2010 school year. The review team saw the strategies in use and heard teachers in focus groups refer to the centrality of Collins Writing in their teaching. This particular set of instructional strategies had taken hold across the grades and content areas. And all principals have developed schedules that enable teachers to meet during the school day whether as departments, grade level teams, or literacy teams. A recent purchase of \$1.25 million in classroom technology has meant that each classroom from kindergarten to grade 8 has 4 to 5 computers for student use, and the high school has additional computer labs. Finally, the district has been able to purchase some up-to-date science materials and textbooks, as well as *Impact Mathematics* textbooks for the 7th and 8th graders. A final key piece in this system is the implementation in the 2010 school year of a new teacher observation and evaluation protocol.

The result of the establishment of these comprehensive systems is that a broad representation of administrative staff has the responsibility to guide and monitor instructional practice, teachers have the time for the training and collaboration necessary to improve that practice, and the district has the instruments to hold teachers and administrators accountable for the improvement of student achievement. The district is poised to improve instruction.

↓ The finding statement presents the CLAIM

← ↓ Key triangulated EVIDENCE to support the claim →

IMPACT ↓ and ↓ JUDGEMENT