

Questions for the Berlin Central School District Board of Education members when considering the “Data Collection and Analysis Protocol” presented at the Special BOE meeting on 1/30/07. (Questions provided to the Superintendent of Schools by J. Nash at the March 20 Board of Education meeting. Questions answered at the following Board of Education meeting – April 24, 2007.)

1. *Why do we need this new comprehensive model for identifying struggling learners?*

This is not a new model. We have placed a new framework around the instructional programs and strategies already in place to provide all stakeholders with an opportunity to see information at a glance – in one place. In other words, the breadth and depth of the programs are articulated fully in this comprehensive framework. Although most of the practices and programs have been in place for some time, there are new programs/strategies included most notably the practices dictated by NY State Education IDEA - **Response To Intervention (RTI)** requirements.

2. *Why can't similar interventions take place with the “old fashion” model (weekly grades, interim reports, and report cards) for identifying struggling learners?*

They do. The best practice though is to use multiple measures which can include the “old fashion” weekly grades, interim reports and report cards. Multiple measures of assessment provide educators with objective means for identifying and addressing the needs of at risk learners.

3. *Will this model take teachers out of the classroom more often? Additional time for grade level meetings and professional development were mentioned as being necessary.*

No. Teachers have always had grade level meetings and team times scheduled on a regular basis. We are looking for ways to increase opportunities for teacher collaboration because teachers working in professional teams on a regular basis contribute to a stronger curriculum. Also, teachers reviewing student performance systematically by grade level provides information for teacher planning that is directly linked to increased student achievement.

4. *Who will be covering for the teachers while they are out of the classroom? (Substitutes are limited at present)*

Presently, grade levels have been covered by TA's and substitutes and this is a model that has been in place for many years. We are not looking to have more time out of classrooms where coverage would be an issue. Instead, we would like to explore other models where teachers can meet as professionals in grade level and cross grade level teams for the sole purpose of improving student achievement.

“There is growing evidence that the best hope for significant school improvement is transforming schools into professional learning communities.” ~ Professional Learning Communities at Work by Richard Dufour and Robert Eaker
Our goal is to create and encourage those professional learning communities. Teacher collaboration when supported by school leaders is associated with higher levels of student learning in effective schools. It is our belief that by encouraging teacher collaboration, our schools can become true communities of learning supporting the growth and development of high-performing teachers and students.

As an educational community, we are faced with two significant questions:
What is it we expect all students to learn?
How will we respond when they do not learn?
Professional Learning Communities give us the opportunity to come to resolution of these two crucial questions, thus leading to consistent expectation and instructional practices and increased student achievement.

5. *Will this additional method of assessment take time away from basic teaching?*

There is no additional method of assessment. Assessment done correctly and used in the appropriate ways does not take away from teaching. Rather assessment is an integral part of instruction and the teaching process. Assessment informs instruction and it must be a combination of formative and summative assessment measures. Pedagogical research and the consultants we have been working with over the last few years confirm that we need to identify benchmarks aligned with the NYS standards and assessments at each grade level. We use these benchmarks to assess students' progress toward meeting the standards.

6. *Professional development, coverage for teachers and travel expenses cost money. How will these expenses be put in the budget?*

Currently and for many years - most if not all - expenses are covered by grants.

7. *How will this model address the deficiencies that currently exist (grades 3-5) and help these children catch up?*

This model provides teachers with more detailed information and facilitates the process of looking at student work and performance to more specifically target instruction in deficit areas.

8. *Can this model be used and will it be effective in addressing the high number of students identified as being in need of AIS in the middle school grades?*

That is the goal.