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Creating Conversations, Changing Cultures: Case Study of a Professional Development Plan

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Abstract

There's a lot working against authentic demonstrations of thinking, and legitimate avenues of collaboration in our school cultures. We force-feed students high-stakes tests that promote a single "right answer" instead of multiple solution paths. Despite research that suggests teachers learn best from each other, we promote the ideal of the teacher-as-maverick. Many of our systems endorse closed-set, closed-door thinking that leaves room for neither independent student thinking nor the collaborative generation of ideas.

Breaking cultures this strong, this endemic, is a weighty task. In a yearlong case study, Alexis Goldberg creates and executes a professional development plan that engages with the question of how to integrate a performance assessment into and across school communities in an effort to promote a different kind of thinking for both learners and educators. To do so, Goldberg brings together teacher leaders from different schools in an attempt to engender dialogue and build culture around shared practice.

The case study, as documented through notes, self reflection and interviews, describes the process of making space for a dialogue that enables teachers to share ideas around the beliefs and practices of teaching. The findings from this study, drawn from observation and interviews with the participants, suggest that while an individual teacher has power to effect change within her classroom, changing a culture is a weightier job than a single teacher can take on and requires the ongoing support of community and the partnership of school leaders. In this study the reader will find description and reflection on the practice of bringing teachers together to engender best practices and allowing teachers to openly discuss challenges and successes at their schools through the dual lenses of performance assessment and student independence.

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Case Study Background and Context

Desperately Seeking Thinking

"So what sticks? What kind of learning lasts beyond a given year that we can grab hold of to guide our vision? I contend that what stays with us from our education are patterns: patterns of behavior, patterns of thinking, patterns of interaction... Through our patterns of behavior, thinking, and interaction, we show what we are made of as thinkers and learners." –Ron Ritchhart, Intellectual Character

Growing up, one of my most vivid school memories was a moment from my junior year of high school. The year was maybe halfway done. We had completed Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stendhal's *The Red and The Black*, and Roddy Doyle's *Paddy Clarke Ha Ha Ha*. I was – where? In math class, probably, muttering "SOH CAH TOA" under my breath as I tried to navigate my way through a set of rules I could remember but never quite apply. And suddenly, the explosion: *They were all the same book.* It was clearer to me than the hypotenuse I was staring at. Sure, the struggles were different, the obstacles, the parents, the prose, even. But they were all books about boys growing up, trying to figure it out. Their concerns weren't, I realized, so very different from the ones I voiced in the reams of free verse poetry I scribbled in graffiti-covered notebooks, where I strove to place myself in the world, to find and name both where I was different and where I was, inevitably and comfortingly, the same. Ms. Chapman, my extraordinary English teacher, never taught us the phrase *bildungsroman*,

and never told us exactly why she picked all these books. It was a surprise, and it rendered me, in that math class moment, the author of my own wonder.

Now, fast-forward about seven years. I'm a first year English teacher in a struggling school. I have no mentor, no curriculum, and a cohort of very difficult students, rendered still more difficult by my own inadequacies and lack of training. In the face of enormous struggles with classroom management, my early ideals about student voice and choice have crumbled. In the first month of school we move from desks in horseshoes to desks in rows, in the second we go from group work to independent work. It's not really getting any better, though. And then, over the bitter trash-blown winds of winter break, I join a group of first year teachers, all struggling, to co-author a month-long poetry unit. Because I was given my teaching assignment the day before school started, it is the first unit of the year I have had an opportunity to backwards design, and it is certainly the first time I have had the benefit of planning with partners. And it is lovely. In January, I place Dylan Thomas' "Do Not Go Gentle" on the overhead projector. I lead students in a line of questioning. They are excited, invigorated. And the next week, when we read Elizabeth Bishop's "One Art," a student notices it is the same pattern: we name it a villanelle. It is like discovering the *bildungsroman* all over again. Teaching can be different.

The work of my case study is born of two strong beliefs. The first is that students need time to think and the quality of this thinking should be both critical and independent. The second is that teachers spend too much time alone. Though these two ideas seem distinct in the groups they target and the kinds of work they engender, what they share is a promotive attitude towards *thinking*, the thinking that that occurs when

students are presented with a developmentally appropriate challenge, and the thinking that occurs in collaboration between teachers. The case study I created was framed by my belief that students learn best through sharpening their thinking dispositions, rather than learning skills or facts in isolation, and my belief that teachers work best in collaboration. These notions birthed the question that frames my case study: "how can I create and implement a professional development plan across schools that honors the knowledge of teachers and school communities and supports independent student problem solving through performance assessment?" In framing my question in this way, I strive to engender student thinking by using performance assessment as the driving force of the content, an outcome that I hope creates avenues for independence and critical thinking; and promotes teacher thinking, by offering a space for teachers to learn and grow from each other.

Testing Drives Instruction: The Realities of Our Cultural Climate

There's a lot working against authentic demonstrations of thinking in our schools. On the student level we see the predominance of standardized testing, where we have forced a wealth of curricular options into the narrow framework of the multiple-choice answer. Because of this, no matter how thoughtfully teachers and schools strive to design their curricula, the multiple-choice driven accountability will remain a driving force in instruction. Thus, part of the work I supported in this case study was a commitment to support a different kind of test, one that can be a positive driver in curriculum planning, rather than promoting rote memorization and recall.

The move toward performance based assessments as a lever and an accountability measure is positive if it replaces a flawed measure of student success with a more authentic one. If the only measure that we have for student outcomes is one that is content driven and attends neither to process nor student thinking, then our society values a curriculum that supports content over process.

> High stakes testing has radically altered the kind of instruction that is offered in American schools, to the point that "teaching to the test" has become a prominent part of the nation's educational landscape... Indeed, both the content and format of instruction are affected; the test essentially *becomes* the curriculum. For example, when students will be judged on the basis of a multiple-choice test, teachers may use multiple-choice exercises and in-class tests beforehand. This has aptly been called the "dumbing down" of instruction (Kohn, 2000).

As Kohn describes it, the prevalence of multiple choice tests has become an agent to drive instruction, to the great detriment of students and teachers who value the kind of thinking that involves multiple solution paths and creative expression.

Replacing this testing culture with a culture that values performance assessment will support a shift toward teaching and learning that values student understanding rather than rote memorization of content. Grant Wiggins in "The Case for Authentic Assessment" (Wiggins, 1990) presents a case for this shift. For the purposes of my research a definition of "authentic assessment" can be used interchangeably with my language around performance assessment, since both refer to a longer, non-routine assessment of student thinking. Wiggins suggests a criteria for his definition of "authentic

assessment" that allows us to see the marked change in instruction that would arise from a shift:

> Assessment is authentic when we directly examine student performance on worthy intellectual tasks. Traditional assessment, by contract, relies on indirect or proxy 'items'--efficient, simplistic substitutes from which we think valid inferences can be made about the student's performance at those valued challenges.
>
> Do we want to evaluate student problem-posing and problem-solving in mathematics? experimental research in science? speaking, listening, and facilitating a discussion? doing document-based historical inquiry? thoroughly revising a piece of imaginative writing until it "works" for the reader? Then let our assessment be built out of such exemplary intellectual challenges. (Wiggins, 1990).

Wiggins's definition of assessment allows us to see the connection between our beliefs about learners and what criteria we select to evaluate them. If we believe the logical supposition that we should assess what we teach, then we must be deliberate in selecting our assessments and making sure that they are as rigorous and intellectually demanding as we would like our curricula to be. Wiggins's examples, of open-ended problem solving in mathematics and creative revision for audience and purpose in English, allow us to imagine a testing culture that assesses real demonstrations of student thinking and learning.

The Context: Personal and Professional

I bring a specific and unique perspective to this work. The factors that influenced my study around building cultures of thinking were very much an outgrowth of my own journey as a teacher and teacher-leader and the belief system that grew out of my own experiences. After five years as a classroom teacher in New York City public schools, I moved into a new role in the fall of 2010 as a Network Level Achievement Coach. In this work, I support teachers and leadership across schools in The Urban Assembly Network, the same network where I was a classroom teacher.

The Urban Assembly is a network of 20 public schools across Manhattan, Brooklyn and The Bronx. The schools serve middle and high school students, primarily from low-income communities. According to The Urban Assembly website: "94% of our students are African-American and Latino. 69% of our students qualify for free and reduced lunch programs. 70% of 9th graders enter our high schools with scores below city and state proficiency in math. 64% are below proficiency in reading. 50% of our students speak a language other than English at home." (The Urban Assembly)

The teachers in the schools across the network are primarily at an early point in their career. As in most New York City public schools, The Urban Assembly has a high yearly teacher turnover. Statistics overwhelmingly cite the significant turnover rate of public school teachers, particularly in schools where the students struggle academically: "almost a quarter of entering public-school teachers leave teaching within the first three years (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). The rates are higher in schools with low academic achievement." (Boyd, Grossman, Lankford, Loeb & Wyckoff, 2009) Because there are myriad emotional and intellectual challenges in the career of a new teacher, and

because the system is often structured to provide minimal support for these challenges, there is a pressing need for collaboration and support amongst colleagues:

> According to Project Lead, 50% of outgoing teachers cite a sense of isolation from colleagues and administrators as a main reason for leaving (Helen Devitt Jones Foundation, n.d.). This finding is consistent with another study conducted by Gonzalas (1995) who also found a major cause of teacher attrition to be lack of positive interaction with colleagues and strong feelings of isolation. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education (2005), 52% of leaving teachers also cited a lack of involvement in and influence over school policy. Additionally, 65% also blamed heavy workloads as a factor which determined their decision to leave the teaching profession permanently. Many of these problems cited by teachers could be alleviated, or possibly even solved, by first highlighting and then practicing collegiality. (Abdallah, 2009)

Given that the trends in the research support collaboration as a means to promote teacher retention and given my own work within the network, first as a classroom teacher and department chair, and later as a coach, I was acutely aware of the need to integrate my own experience and the research into a system that supported teacher retention and growth within the context of my work at The Urban Assembly.

My conviction that it was important to promote teacher interaction across schools, is very much at odds with the structural incentives (or disincentives) for this kind of collaboration. Despite a system that has begun to pay lip-service to collaboration in the last few years, the cultural norm is very much one that values isolation and limits access to and communication between schools. For example, in New York City, we pit schools

against each other, inviting them to get a "grade" within their "peer cohort" and thus creating a model of scarcity wherein there are only so many "As" to go around. According to the Educators Guide for the Progress Reports, "To raise the bar for schools and increase stability in grades, the overall cut scores were determined for 2009-10 based on a set grade distribution: 25% As 35% Bs 25% Cs 10% Ds 5% Fs" ("Educator guide: the," 2009) These policies create a system which encourages schools to keep their knowledge to themselves. When the school system creates a structure that supports competition, it becomes increasingly difficult to create a community where schools feel mutually invested in each other's success.

The Development and Evolution of An Assessment Tool

The Urban Assembly administers a performance-based assessment, The College-Ready Performance Assessment System (C-PAS), at most of the schools in the network twice yearly. The assessment, based on the research of Dr. David Conley and the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC), asks students to engage in independent problem solving of problems with open-ended solution paths. C-PAS evaluates students on five Key Cognitive Strategies (KCS) that ask students to demonstrate competence in the areas Conley identifies as integral to college success: problem formulation, research, interpretation, communication, and precision/accuracy. These five areas, according to Conley, are indicators of college readiness and success. According to EPIC the goal of C-PAS is to measure college readiness, and to provide opportunities for teachers to integrate characteristics of the assessment into their curricula:

> The goal of this project is to develop an assessment system that gauges student performance and development from sixth through twelfth grade on a set of key cognitive strategies associated with success in entry-level college courses. The assessments are incorporated into the curriculum. They encourage and support teaching practices that focus on building student reasoning, analysis, and cognitive processing. They guide teachers and encourage them to incorporate activities that stimulate higher order thinking within the context of challenging content. They help encourage creativity in the classroom. (Educational Policy Improvement Center, 2011)

It is important to note that the assessment is designed to "guide teachers and encourage them to incorporate activities that stimulate higher order thinking…" that is, to lead back to the curricula, as a summative benchmark for backwards design that allows teachers to use the assessment to integrate these skills into their curriculum. The assessment also allows teachers to revise their curricula after each administration, based on their students' performance on each KCS, and, finally, to use the KCS as an entry point to naming and supporting college ready skills with their students. It also encourages the ongoing use of non-routine assessments, through which students become accustomed to the creative problem solving that is embedded in these assessments throughout the course of their academic career.

Institutional History of C-PAS

In the Fall of 2010 I wrote an explanatory document for The Urban Assembly, describing the public face of our relationship with EPIC and the assessment. This

document, excerpted below, is probably the best entry point to understanding the relationship between The Urban Assembly and EPIC:

> The College-Ready Performance Assessment System (C-PAS) is an innovative assessment developed in collaboration between The Urban Assembly and Dr. David Conley of the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC). Conley, author of *College and Career Ready*, developed the C-PAS system to assess Key Cognitive Strategies that Conley's research shows lead to college success. The Urban Assembly partnered with EPIC to create and administer this assessment so that teachers receive meaningful feedback on the college readiness of Urban Assembly students... C-PAS assessment results yield data for use by teachers, administrators, students and parents. The scores generated by C-PAS help educators as they consider how their curriculum and instruction helps students to perform on college ready skills… The Urban Assembly has created and implements strategies to respond to these data, including systems for scoring, examining data, and using that data to revise curriculum planning and instruction. The work has radically changed instructional design and execution across the network." (Appendix A)

This is, as of this writing, The Urban Assembly's public position around the assessment. The history of the assessment in the network is a bit more complex. I should note that to provide context I am drawing on institutional memory, and my understanding of the history pre-dates my own involvement with the project. I offer something closer to folklore than a qualitatively analyzed truth. This narrative is the collective understanding of the network, as it was transmitted to me through informal conversations from the

coaches who worked at The Urban Assembly since the evolution of the project. I formed this understanding based on ongoing conversations with co-workers and network leadership.

The project began as a "developmental partnership" between The Urban Assembly and EPIC. In the agreement it was determined that some teachers would try on the system, and that UA would provide EPIC with feedback on the system. Though this was the theory, the reality was different. Most of the teachers were asked to do the work, as a model for piloting was not clearly communicated. Many of the teachers rejected the new mandate and critiqued the work as externally imposed. Teachers were resistant to the work, in response to being presented with an assessment without being provided appropriate context on the work. The network might have also lacked a clear plan around addressing adult resistance to change, and acknowledging that external systems that are foisted upon adults without context or sensitivity are often doomed to an unwelcome reception.

However, a significant learning emerged from the early iterations of the assessment. In many schools across the network, there arose a shared realization that students were unsuccessful on certain elements of the C-PAS, for example, research. These realizations, even in spaces of deep resistance, prompted a kind of gradual reckoning, and thus began the "second shift" of the work, a move from a focus on the assessment, C-PAS, to a focus on the values behind them, the Key Cognitive Strategies. Thus began what my colleagues refer to as "the mapping era" – an intense focus on writing Key Cognitive Strategy aligned curricula, buoyed by the underlying assumption that we cannot assess strategies we are not teaching. By incorporating the Key Cognitive

Strategies into the curricula, we can ask teachers to consider how they are teaching these "college ready skills" rather than simply allowing them to feel frustration in administering a time-consuming and unfamiliar assessment.

The most recent iteration of the work came when I arrived at the network with notions about how to use the teacher liaisons to transform the cultures across schools. In my new role, I worked in many capacities, but largely I was responsive to the need for a project coordinator for the C-PAS work and assumed that role and all that it entailed. Although not enough time has passed to assess the lasting impact of my own work, I can say that the 2010-11 school year represented yet another shift in the evolution of the work, a shift that will be described over the course of the case study, in the service of creating a collaborative community.

A Personal Transformation Yields a Public Shift

In my own teaching, understanding the nature and uses of performance assessment was transformative for my practice. Changing my perspective to name what I previously conceived of as a "project" as an assessment, measuring thought process and student understanding instead of content objectives, and honoring the assessment as a holistic process, rather than examining the final product in isolation, all impacted my teaching practice significantly. For me, those realizations came when I had an opportunity to interact and learn with other teachers and coaches within The Urban Assembly.

Given the context of my work, my initial reluctance as a teacher administering the assessment, and how my perspective changed from reluctance to support only once I

achieved a sense of ownership over the work, I sought to identify and name my experiences, so that I could replicate them in my work with teachers. When The Urban Assembly gave me the opportunity to work with the C-PAS Coordinators (the group of teacher-leaders charged with supporting the assessment at their schools), I was eager to include not only the research I encountered on adult development, professional learning communities and performance assessment in shaping the teacher-leader role, but also to honor my own knowledge and experience with the work. In doing the work, and writing about it critically, I deliberately chose to incorporate my self-knowledge as a point of departure, knowing it is an area of both strength and limitations.

My own background is intimately connected with the work of the network. My previous experience was as a teacher in an Urban Assembly school, where, as a third year teacher, I was frustrated to find myself being told to give a "test" that to me seemed like an entire unit, one I was confident I could have designed better myself. I didn't understand the context of the assessment, nor the rationale behind it, which seemed divorced from my daily classroom instruction and which, to me, included unreasonable expectations for struggling learners. Since the assessment did not have built-in differentiation I could not determine how to scaffold it for all learners. I spent that year negotiating the assessment to the best of my ability. Largely, for me, this meant working around the KCSs to fit the assessment into the mold of a traditional literary assessment, ignoring the process standards for the traditional skills and content of an English assessment.

By the next year, I assumed a leadership position in my department: English Department Chair. In this position I found more support around administering the

assessment. I participated in a series of "teacher leader" meetings across the network that allowed me to see successful completed examples of the performance assessment, as well as hear from teachers who had experienced success with the assessment. This brought my own experiences and student expectations into sharp relief and I struggled with confronting my own assumptions around student ability. Before this I had assessed my student performance strictly on the basis of English Language Arts standards, and had not thought about the importance of independence or their ability to integrate the standards without support. I judged my own success on my students' ability to master these various competencies, without attention to their sustained ability to apply them independently. The major shift occurred when I started thinking about assessing my students' ability to apply these skills and procedures with minimal support across a process, rather than in isolation. My practice truly changed when cross-network meetings engendered the realization that if by the end of high school my students had *not* mastered these skills, they would not have the necessary tools for success in college.

In writing about these experiences in July 2010 (Appendix B), I wrote about my own shift in the work and the experience I had confronting my own expectations:

> In my own experience with administering Performance Based Assessments and working with other teachers to facilitate the administration of PBAs, I have noticed a real reluctance around the adaptation of the practice of this kind of testing. Now, whether this springs from an unwillingness to dive into this kind of assessment or a resistance to the specific *way* we do this work in our network (the locus is around a cumbersome early model of what may one day attempt to be a more sleek

> and standardized PBA) is difficult to parse out. My own personal pushback came less from the *kind* of work we were doing and more from the specificity of the requirements for the C-PAS. (Appendix B)

My changing relationship to this work grew out of a shift in my understanding of the work itself. Once I was able to see, broadly, the implications for C-PAS in my teaching, and across the network, I became more willing to creatively problem-solve my way through the difficulties. This was also a result of my move into an "insider" role in the process: working closely with the coaches at the network gave me a conceptual framework and ideology to undergird my classroom practice. When I was a cog in the machine of this process I had no incentive to buy-in, nor any reason to believe that this work was more valuable than what I had planned for my own classes. The shift came from being able to see "big-picture." It was this shift that engendered an "aha" moment for me in my work at The Urban Assembly as I was considering how to work with the C-PAS coordinator group. To support and transform practices around the assessment, I realized I needed to help everybody feel the same sense of ownership and transformation that I felt in the work.

The Big How: Shifting a Culture

My own shifting role helped me consider how teacher-leaders might make sense of the work over time and across their different roles. As a teacher I had one perspective on the assessment system, as a coach working at a network level I had quite another. My understanding of this work changed dramatically when I saw the various ways different schools engaged with the process. These seismic differences led me to wonder what

cultural factors influenced teacher and school-level buy-in around this work. Administering the assessment was important, I believed in it deeply, but I knew to affect myriad cultures I needed a strategic plan for change across the school sites.

From the vantage point of the network I was able to observe the long-term implications of the assessment and promote the values of the work across school sites, but on the school level this perspective did not always feel relevant and I had to take on a different stance – at different moments in this work I was at once collaborator and troubleshooter, cheerleader and sage, sounding-board and questioner. Shifting among the roles was the act of "stepping onto the balcony" – the notion proposed by Heifetz in his seminal leadership text, *Leadership Without Easy Answers* (Heifetz, 1998) According to Heifetz,

> Leadership is both active and reflective. One has to alternate between participating and observing. Walt Whitman described it as being 'both in and out of the game'… Consider the experience of dancing on a dance floor in contrast with standing on a balcony and watching other people dance. Engaged in the dance, it is nearly impossible to get a sense of the patterns made by everyone on the floor. Motion makes observation difficult. Indeed, we often get carried away by the dance... To discern the larger patterns on the dance floor – to see who is dancing with whom, in what groups, in what location. And who is sitting out which kind of dance – we have to stop and get to the balcony. (p. 252).

The realization that to be successful in my role I needed to be able to move between the 'balcony' and the 'dance floor,' was the reason I sought to open the wide-lens on the camera for the teachers in the network as well. This was an idea engendered by my

shifting role: for the work to be successful, it must allow for those engaging in it to step on and off the balcony as well, must allow for collaboration and shared objectives, but must also support individual work at schools. The method, as I saw it, to meet all these objectives was to encourage teacher talk across schools. The opportunity to understand the work in a broader context had provided such a rich form of growth and development for me as I assumed a leadership role, that it seemed critical to expose teachers across the network to this balcony view. For many learners, understanding context is crucial to their engagement and thus to their learning. From this understanding, the plan to create cross-network conversations between teacher-leaders was born.

Research Methods

My work, which was once an action research project, evolved over time into a case study of a professional development plan. Thus, much of my research is formed from the agendas, notes, and email correspondences that took place while I was in the coordinator role. Another source of my research was my own notes and perceptions of the work and the experience. Finally to capture individual teacher responses to the work, I interviewed three teacher-leaders across three different schools. In these interviews I asked a series of questioned regarding their perceptions of their own work, their experiences in the meetings, and their understandings of themselves as teacher-leaders in the context of their schools. The reactions and responses helped to shape my understandings, not only of the work of the professional development series, but also of my leadership journey in the work over the course of this year and the effectiveness of the professional development plan I designed.

My rationale for this methodology is based in Joseph A. Maxwell's processes for Qualitative Research Design. Maxwell (2005) suggests that triangulation allows a research to "reduce... the risk that your conclusions will reflect only the systematic biases or limitations of a specific source or method, and allows you to gain a broader and more secure understanding of the issues you are investigating" (Maxwell, p. 92-93). In my work, it was important to use my own records of the process, as well as the words of the teachers and the artifacts of the work itself as evidence in making meaning of the process. Maxwell's articulation of methods also helped me to build a framework of self-reflection

into the study. I use his suggestion of writing "memos" to myself (p. 27) as a foundational way of framing the reflection of the project.

Review of Literature

Much has been written about change in school cultures. In order to successfully investigate change in the context of my work, I examined three primary areas: School culture change, methods of professional development (specifically the use of peer-to-peer talk as a method for teacher growth), and the rationale behind performance-based assessments.

The body of research on school culture change demonstrates that school leaders must be cognizant of both the systems and the individuals that reform effects, as well as the relationship inherent between these individuals and systems. Thus to inform my research, I turned to systems thinkers who advocate examining a district (for my purposes, district is synonymous with network) holistically to glean understandings about the systems and structures underneath the organization.

I looked largely to systems thinkers such as Fullan, Sarason and Evans, who offer systematic strategies to effect change within existing cultures. This change writing is inflected by theories of leadership that consider stakeholders in the school community as essential to the conversation about school change and reform. All take into account the role that networks can play in effecting school change and consider the relevance of external partnerships in these scenarios. Such notions about leadership and school change point toward a preferred model of collaborative work with teacher-leaders that have been shown to yield high leverage results.

A strong consideration in creating a professional development model is adult learning styles. This is supported by the body of scholarly work on using Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to shape teacher practice to effect change within a school

community. Attending to adult learning styles also supports turning to theories of adult development and resistance to culture change as an essential way to understand and create positive professional development.

Finally I examined the rationale behind the performance assessment that is the context of the work. I examined both the rationale behind performance assessment and the best implementation strategies for this type of assessment. I focused on the distinction between assessment *of* learning and assessment *for* learning, and the ways that teachers and students might understand the tension inherent in this dichotomy and use it to their advantage.

School Cultures and Systems Thinking

A consideration of the systems thinking based research on building and developing school cultures should start with a shared understanding of the terms "school culture" and "systems thinking." For the purposes of this work, I refer to culture as using Edgar Schein's definition:

> The deeper level of *basic assumptions* and *beliefs* that are shared by members of an organization, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic 'taken for granted' fashion, an organization's view of itself and its environment. These assumptions and beliefs are learned responses to a group's problems of *survival* in the external environmental and its problems of *internal integration*... (Schein, 2010).

With this understanding of school culture the difficulties that permeate institutional change are clear. To change an institution, this definition supposes, you must change its

core values. And, indeed, it is only in this kind of fundamental change that you can see true change in the outcomes of the work of a school.

Another important phrase for the work of thinking about school culture is the term "systems thinking." When I use the term "systems thinking" my understanding is drawn from Peter Senge's seminal text *The Fifth Discipline* (1990). Senge suggests that successful "learning organizations," engage in five disciplines. They are,

> (1) Personal Mastery… the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision… (2) Mental Models… deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action… Building Shared Vision… involves the skills of unearthing shared "pictures of the future" that foster genuine commitment… rather than compliance. (3) Team Learning… is vital because teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organizations [and] (5) Systems Thinking [a]… conceptual framework… to make the full patterns [of organizations] clearer and to help us see them more effectively. (p. 6-10)

Senge explains that Systems Thinking, which he refers to as "the fifth discipline," is the guiding principal that connects the other four and allows members of an organization to understand the related nature of their work and establish a shared understanding of where the organization is headed. "A learning organization is a place where people are continually discovering how they create their reality. And how they can change it." (p. 12) This thinking considers the interconnected nature of an organization and enables

every participant within that organization to be both actor and participant in shaping the communal wealth of knowledge.

With these definitions in place, we can consider the research on shifting a school culture through the use of systems thinking. Fullan (2005) provides a compelling description of this work. His notions of changing school culture begin by establishing the importance of *changing context* as integral to changing an entire system.

> Changing whole systems means changing the entire context within which people work... Drawing from complexity theory, I have already made the case that if you want to change systems, you need to increase the amount of purposeful interaction between and among individuals within and across the tri-levels, and indeed within and across systems… So, we need first of all to commit to changing context. (Fullan 2005, p. 16)

Fullan inflects the term "systems thinking" with the suggestion that a successful systems leader can change the context within and across systems. Given that understanding, the next consideration in changing culture is the rate and pace that systems are considered and adopted, and these factors relative to the scope of change itself.

Evans (1996) concludes that school change is rooted in an overhaul of the systemic structures and assumptions that underlie a school community. To change schools you need to change the "behaviors, norms and beliefs of practitioners." (p. 4-5) The first step toward that end is investing stakeholders in creating change. Evans levies a strong argument for creating interested stakeholders to effect school reform, because without what he refers to as "a base of support for innovation" (p. 16) there is little room for adoption of reform models. He describes the arrogance of a subjective approach to

reform, couched in the belief that there is *one* correct model for reform, this model, he suggests, does not take into account the needs of the teacher within the school community. "The reason is straightforward: the subjective reality of the implementer (in schools, the personal experience of the teacher) is crucial to successful innovation; transforming this subjective reality is a key task of change." (p. 16) In short, all change must be designed with the perspective of the teacher in mind. Since the teacher is the principal actor of the reform scenario, their "subjective reality" must be the first concern of the reformer.

When developing opportunities for capacity building among teachers it is essential to consider the *stance* we take in relation to those teachers (Sarason, 1996). We must be cognizant of the difficulties inherent in proposing a change without considering the nature of change and development among adults: "Those who attempt to introduce a change rarely, if ever, begin the process by being clear as to where those teachers *are.* In short, they are guilty of the very criticism they make of teachers: *not being sensitive to what and how and why children think as they do."* (p. 232) Change comes about from listening to teachers, and hearing what they have to say about their schools and their practice. With this as a starting point, we can build a strong foundation for the work of change (Sarason, 1996).

Thus, if we seek to create a sustainable change-model, we need first to understand the capacity of teachers to sustain such a model and to believe that change is what they have asked for. This can be executed through understanding prior knowledge and developing relationships that create interest, and in turn, stakeholders, in the decision making process. The Concerns-Based Adoption Model, one form of an approach to

system-wide change, is one example of an effective change-model, notable because of the role of an outside consultant in helping a school site adopt reform practices. The Concerns-Based Adoption Model defines six essential elements of "change facilitators": "Developing and communicating a shared vision, planning and providing resources, supporting professional learning, checking on progress, and providing continuous assistance" as the hallmarks of "creating a context supportive of change." (Roach, Kratochwill, Frank, 2009, p. 301). These ideas remove outsiders from the center, and operate under the assumption that the change agents in a school community are the members of that school community. Thus, as an outsider working to create change in a school culture, the first order of business is creating the right context by working to build trust and relationships among members of the group.

Once these relationships are intact, we can set about the difficult task of capacity building, that is, developing stakeholders into leaders. Fullan (2005) describes a model of "lateral capacity building" that allows for "ongoing purposeful exchange" between peers. He addresses the necessity for lateral capacity building of peer groups for focused exchange, alongside a vertical model that honors the "tension" of "how to get both local ownership (including capacity) and external accountability…" (Fullan, 2005, p. 19). The emphasis on creating a space for peer-to-peer dialogue, *even outside the school level,* is a foundational point in my study. Fullan describes the expectation that when we structure the foundations for a culture shift, we are not only talking about the work within schools, but also the work *across* schools, what he refers to as "vertical relationships." When these relationships are most fruitful, they include supports and resources on the one hand and accountability on the other hand. He suggests that small groups of teachers can be

supported in the work of change by creating both external accountability systems and peer-based models for accountable reciprocity.

Fullan describes a Hay-Group study which demonstrates how schools that measure higher on various measures of success rank "promoting excellence – pushing the boundaries for achievement" as a value that guides their school culture, while schools that do not serve their students as well consider, "recognizing personal circumstances--making allowances—toleration – it's the effort that counts" as an important factor in their culture. He interprets these findings by suggesting, "that effective cultures establish more and more progressive interactions in which demanding processes produce both good ideas and social cohesion." (p. 57-59). In short, the culture of the school is buoyed by the collective belief in demanding processes that at once enact a challenging and motivating culture, and make use of the knowledge of the school community.

Thus, in order to make a lasting school change, the change agent must address the organization and belief structure of school cultures. According to Waters, Marzano and McNulty, (2003) in a meta-analysis of various studies, the issue of how to create this lasting school change can be framed as an issue of 'magnitude' of change. According to Waters et al,

> On both individual and collective levels, changes that are consistent with existing values and norms, create advantages for individuals or stakeholder groups with similar interests, can be implemented with existing knowledge and resources, and where agreement exists on what changes are needed and on how the changes should be implemented can be considered first order… A change becomes second order when it is not

> obvious how it will make things better for people with similar interests, it requires individuals or groups of stakeholders to learn new approaches, or it conflicts with prevailing values or norms. (p. 7)

To create a second order change, that is a *lasting* change, it is necessary to create stakeholders even when they may not directly understand the significance of their role or the long-term consequences initially. In some ways, the process of creating a second-order change might be seen as the process of creating structures to sell stakeholders on the new paradigm.

According to the Waters et al (2003), whether a change is first order of second order may differ according to the needs of the school community. If a school community has values that ensure that a commitment to reflection and changes to practice are part of the school culture, then a change in practice might not be considered a second order change. If, on the other hand, a school has a culture that does not support these values, then a change in teacher practice will be a deep cultural upheaval, and certainly be considered a second order change. In considering these ideas when working across school environments, there is an interesting element introduced: schools may house very different cultures, and the work that for one school or group of teachers may be a first order change might be a dramatic second-order change for another. Creating space for those conversations to exist is one of the more challenge elements of working across school buildings.

Another vital consideration is the continuity and consistency of teacher support. According to Evans (1996), "To be effective, training must also be continuous. That is it must not proceed innovation, but accompany it through the early and into the middle

stages of innovation. Mastery… is typically the last stage of a complex cognitive and affective process." (p. 64) Evans describes the shift from the initial stages of a change to a deeper second-order change, and in so doing, underscores the importance of an *ongoing* support structure, and the necessity of a model that allows for continuous support. We can now return to the ideas behind systems thinking and the notion that in creating models for ongoing support, it is essential to examine the whole landscape of change, from the individual players to the largest aspects of organizational culture.

Using Learning Communities to Support District Level Change

To implement systems level change it is important to consider the tension between local ownership and external accountability. "Sustainable societies must solve (hold in dynamic ''tension'') the perennial change problem of how to get both local ownership (including capacity) and external accountability; and to get this in the entire system… Solutions rely, at least in part, on the users themselves and their capacity to take school responsibility for positive outcomes." (Bentley and Wilsdon, 2003, p. 20). In other words, we need to empower individual actors in school communities to take ownership for the success of the system. This involves finding some way to make the big picture local, to create space for understanding the bigger picture in smaller groups. The way, everyone seems to agree, is through professional learning communities.

For the purposes of this research, Professional Leaning Communities will be broadly defined as "small groups of faculty who meet regularly to study more effective learning and teaching practices." (Dana and Yandol-Hoppey, 2008, p.15). This returns to the previous discussion of systems thinking and culture shifts. In order to make a change

among faculty, change agents must be cognizant of the players involved in that change, and explicit about the need to create stakeholders in the change. As Dana and Yandol-Hoppey suggest,

> Increasingly, school systems at the national, district and school levels, are rethinking their understanding of reform to include systematic change that grows from local roots. The notion that leadership capacity and change can be homegrown within a school community, has at its core two complimentary ideas: the first, that teachers themselves are the gatekeepers of professional knowledge; the second, that school reform can only be evinced if those closest to the students are engaged in the reform process. On a practical level, this looks like a commitment to creating self-sustaining professional communities within schools that allow for exploration of practice and student work and create an environment that supports long-term change. (Dana and Yendol-Hoppey, 2008).

Through professional learning communities, then, we can accomplish the dual purpose of both engendering change by building capacity and supporting professional growth.

Senge describes this knowledge as, "Shaping a Culture of Reflectiveness and Deeper Conversation." He explains that, "in dialogue individuals gain new insights that could not be achieved individually… a group explores a complex difficult issue from many points of view." (p. 224) If professional dialogue across networks is the gold standard of large scale culture shifts and individual learning, it becomes increasingly important to codify the qualities of the dialogue that will yield the kind of second order

change that we hope for. Senge enumerate the conditions necessary for this kind of dialogue:

> 1. all participants must "suspend their assumptions, literally to hold them "as if suspended before us"; 2. all participants must regard one another as colleagues; 3. there must be a "facilitator" who "holds the context" of dialogue (p. 226)

According to Senge, in order to invoke that fabled fifth discipline, to even arrive at a place of conversation about the organization as a whole, it is vital to create appropriate conditions for dialogue, conditions where participants hold each other mutually accountable in a community of respect and shared understanding.

For this community and dialogue to flourish, a change must occur in the shift from perceiving teachers as receivers of professional development to perceiving teachers as *actors* in their own professional development. "There is a national reform movement... that asks for an ideological shift around the way that teachers and schools think about the distribution of knowledge. Traditionally, the nature of professional development was characterized by "workshops delivered on in-service days… [where] teachers often learn about a new pedagogy from an outside expert, and then go back to their classrooms the next day to implement the new knowledge that was handed down from the expert" (Dana and Yendol-Hoppey, 2008). At the other side of this "handed down knowledge" sits the professional learning community, an idea that has moved squarely to the front of progressive educational communities over the course of many years.

The success of this model seen in the work that occurred at New Dorp High School by using a strategy that provides teachers on the school level with the capacity for success through a collaborative partnership with an external organization. "Starting Small

for Big School Reform," (2010) a longitudinal study of a reform community in New Dorp High School in Staten Island, speaks to the "power of staying small," and the value of the improvement that derives from teams studying the school and sharing practices for student improvement. The article underscores key factors in growing this kind of reform work, such as "a strong collaboration between a principal and an external facilitator who understands that getting small is not an end in itself, but a strategy for larger change." (Scharff and DeAngelis, p. 59) According to this article some of the qualities that effect the success of a professional learning community in a school district are "a partnership with a well trained external facilitator who has a deep understanding of program principles and strategies" and "strong collaboration between the principal and other school leadership and the external facilitator when deciding how best to move between staying small and getting big." (p. 59) Since much of the body of research on professional learning communities does not focus on the presence of an external partner, the work is an important case study that promotes the value of an outside eye in providing a larger perspective on the nature of the work, and creating a space for teachers to come together in effective dialogue.

The use of a professional learning community as a way to engage teachers in a deep conversation about their practice allows teachers to be owners of their own professional practice. Insights from the neuroscience community provide reinforcement of the notion that PLCs provide teachers with a meaningful entry-point to making long-term changes within their practice. Brain science links the way in which learning is experienced to how it is remembered, transformed into practice and sustained. (Sousa, 2009) Sousa links meaning making to some of the following characteristics: "present the topic over enough

time and in enough depth so teachers gain a thorough understanding of how it relates to their work," "use instructional modalities other than 'telling,'" and "promote in-school study groups around the topic. As group members exchange new research and share in-class experiences, they can analyze why – and under what conditions – a strategy is effective." (Sousa, 2009). Sousa presents an argument for how providing a wide-angle view and creating meaning independently allows for deeper understanding and richer outcomes in teacher learning.

Taken together, the research presents a compelling argument for how professional learning communities, or structures that engender teacher-to-teacher conversation, allow teachers to create and retain meaning in their individual classrooms. The research also addresses the system-wide benefit of a learning community and the way in which shared understandings and relationships can affect a culture in its totality. Finally, it supports the notion that an outside partner can be a change agent in implementing this kind of work within and across school communities.

Performance Based Assessment

The framework that undergirds this work is shifting school culture toward performance based assessment and away from the kind of assessment that the accountability-driven society relentlessly promotes. For our purposes, we will use the following definition of performance assessment: "The respondent actually carries out a specified activity under the watchful eye of an evaluator, who observes performance and makes judgments as to the quality of achievement demonstrated. Performance

assessments can be based either on observations of the process while skills are being demonstrated or the evaluation of products created." (Stiggins, 1994, p. 77-78.)

The understanding of the uses and applications for performance assessment expands when we consider the shift to performance assessment as a question of respect and *tact*. In discussing the climate and culture around testing that does *not* offer multiple solution paths, Wiggins suggests:

> ...a tester, without intending to do so, treats the student as an object while tacitly demanding, 'Answer *my* question, *my* way. You have one try in which to do it; and you get no opportunity to rethink your answer based on feedback, because you'll get no feedback.' In a relationship, such a demand would be viewed (properly) as tactless, insensitive, overbearing. I would argue that it is equally inappropriate in a test situation." (1993, p. 109).

Wiggins elegantly makes the case that closed-set assessment is a disrespectful way of approaching the learner, that if we want to honor their learning process we must give them questions without anticipating a particular answer, and allowing for a process that includes feedback.

According to *Performance Assessment and the Standards-Based Curricula: The Achievement Cycle*, Glatthorn et al (1998) note that performance assessment can be an ongoing measure of student outcomes, not only a summative assessment. Assessment driven instruction can provide an avenue to improve authentic learning. Using performance assessment, teachers can coach students toward success on specific testing measures. This kind of academic support is vastly different than the "drill and kill"

notions of teaching to the test that permeate a standardized-test based culture. Teaching toward an *assessment* rather than a test allows students practice and mastery in a content area in a way that is very different than the rote memorization that characterizes testing culture. The book even suggests a paradigm that allows for "assessment based units," that is units of study are "planned to prepare students for and engage them in performance assessments so that they might achieve authentic learning." (Glatthorn, p. 63). In this paradigm the teacher must "model reflection and insightful thinking" and "help make the environment one that supports learning" (p. 77). Since performance assessment is a tool for ongoing instruction and learning, and the shift in ideology toward this paradigm for assessment can dramatically impact a school culture, the impetus to use professional learning communities to promote a culture shift to performance assessment seems an intuitive fit as well as an appropriate way to take the network wide commitment to C-PAS and make it personally accessible to all the players in the community.

Summary of Findings

In preparing to execute on the professional development plan, I examined research in three areas: systems thinking around creating culture changes across schools, the uses and effectiveness of professional learning communities, and the value of performance-based assessment. These three domains combined to inform my understanding of the work ahead.

The systems thinking provided the context and environment for my case study. Working across a diverse group of schools, it was necessary to have an understanding of how complex factors affect each other, and an ability to see the relationships in the

community on a large scale but also at the school level and the individual teacher level. The context systems thinking brought to the work proved invaluable in framing my notions about change and working to scale.

The framing would not have been impactful if I did not have a specific method to apply to the frame. That method is engaging in collegial dialogue through professional learning communities. This body of work provided me with an understanding of how to create effective dialogue across diverse communities and helped me to position myself in a constructivist position, as both a learner and an objective observer of the work, an insider with access to knowledge from others as well as knowledge about existing cultures.

Finally, I habitually returned to the *what* behind the professional learning conversations that are the focus of my study. Reading and investigating performance assessment was integral to supporting teachers and learners in this journey. As I learned about authentic performance demonstrations and the need to situate them within the context of learning, I began to see a clear connection between the assessment and the kinds of learning that this program asked from teachers. The subject and the object of the study were essentially the same: authentic learning, based in feedback and response that asks for learners to make their process transparent. The knowledge that the content of the professional development mirrored the form of the work gave me increasing confidence in executing my plan.

The Case Study

My Work Begins

In the fall of 2010, I began work at The Urban Assembly. One part of my work would be with the group of "C-PAS Coordinators," a cohort I was once a member of. I was introduced to the work with the assumption that I would run one meeting a semester (the choice of the word "run" is deliberate, as the meetings were transactional in nature). These meetings would clarify polices and procedures around the assessment system, but nothing more. There was also a tacit understanding that these meetings were in the service of supporting an administrative role.

However, in response to the need for support that I noticed, and had experienced when I was in this role, I sought to provide more opportunities for coordinators to receive both formal and informal support. Conceiving the role as an administrative one is contingent on the notion that the only support that needed to deliver a performance based assessment is administrative. Based on my own experience, this understanding did not reflect the nature of the work. The premise that the work is administrative underestimates the challenges inherent in shifting to a performance based assessment model, and the challenges of adapting a teaching practice to meet the needs of this new model. Further, what C-PAS asks teacher to change their practice *to*–that is the shift in assessment culture–is a significant change. This change asks teachers to wrestle with more than just practices; it pushes at the *values* beneath their work.

When I began in this role I first considered what support should and could look like and I wondered about the ability to provide support from a network level role. My

first step in this journey was to compile a list of questions to shape my model for support and communication. I wondered:

- What does support for a teacher leadership role look like when the expectation is mandated externally? That is, what does it mean that the role was not conceived and supported in the schools?
- Can a role that was created externally effect change within an individual school? Can changes within school cultures be promoted from outside the school community?
- Is there a reason for an external support system to work directly with teachers (as opposed to leadership)?
- Can there be a successful model for teacher learning through intra-school communication?
- Does support look the same for every school? If not, how do I successfully differentiate the support for this work while working across schools?

Considering these questions was essential as I set out to understand and redefine the role of the coordinator.

Redefining the Role of the Coordinator

Since the role I had to work with was one that already existed I did not have the luxury of inventing a role and defining the parameters. However, I will note that given that the role evolved organically over time, no one had ever created a specific framework with the responsibilities of the role. When I began my work with the cohort, I was confronted with the nebulous nature of the role. In some ways this was frustrating, insofar

as I felt the burden of inventing the specific parameters in a reactive, rather than a pro-active way; however in other ways it was helpful, because it allowed me to mold and create the role in response to the needs I perceived and learned about throughout my own experience, my research, and my observations of the work.

I began by trying to come to a working definition of the role. In September of 2010, I gathered feedback from my colleagues asking for the description of the criteria for a C-PAS coordinator as I began to reach out to teachers and principals around selecting teacher leaders for that role. A rough list was generated, drawn from my colleagues who had worked with the individuals in this role for the previous years. The list included the following attributes:

- C-PAS buy in
- ability to be a "creative cheerleader"
- teacher leader is in a position where they can work across departments with success
- skilled with facilitation
- teacher leader has a relationship with their principal
- teacher leader has a relationship with their coach
- willing to reach out and ask for help/support from coaches
- super organized

This list, though short and eclectic, represents a mental-model that derived from the architecture of the role in previous years. Several of the elements highlighted value relationships within and outside of the school (ability to work across departments, relationship with achievement coaches, ability to be a "creative cheerleader"). Holding

this framework up against my own experience in the previous years, I began to speculate that perhaps there was a shared but tacit understanding that the responsibilities of the C-PAS Coordinator did not fully match the expectations of the C-PAS Coordinator.

One of the things I would have liked when I was working in the role of C-PAS Coordinator was a clear set of expectations *prior to beginning the work.* Although, over the course of the semester we were supplied with deadlines, I did not truly understand what the role of CPAS Coordinator meant and what responsibilities were inherent in the job. To rectify this, one of the first moves I made in my new role was to create a "C-PAS Coordinator Binder" (Appendix C) that contained information about deadlines, structural elements of the work, and expectations for the coordinator.

Given the conversations I had with colleagues, and my own shifting understanding of the role, I included the following description in the binder for "C-PAS Coordinator Roles and Responsibilities":

Roles and Responsibilities of C-PAS Coordinators

1. Meet all deadlines listed in C-PAS planning calendar
2. Assist teachers with online registration
3. Assist teachers with task administration questions
4. Provide deadlines and information to all teachers administering C-PAS
5. Meet with principal and achievement coach to coordinate deadlines around scoring and data implications meetings (Appendix C)

This nascent attempt at codifying the work already began to suggest the complexity in the administrative/not-so-administrative nature of the role. The nebulous "assist teachers with task administration questions" seems to cover elements of a technical nature, such as the

length of time to give to a task, but those elements all unfold to reveal issues of core values (e.g. externally mandated vs. autonomously selected use of time, scaffolding vs. student independence).

In addition, the contract that teachers were given when they began the work did much to define the role. By crafting the work as a checklist of administrative responsibilities, it clearly shows the values beneath the work. With some latitude to reshape the position, I was determined to shift it toward a more purposefully instructional role. As the memo I wrote in August demonstrated, I entered the job feeling strongly the need for a role that responded to instructional, rather than administrative needs. (Appendix B)

The Evolution of the Role

As I became more comfortable in *my* new coaching role, I felt freedom to attend to making changes in the work of the coordinator. In the first meeting of the year, I had attempted to make changes and address what I saw as instructional needs. However, I only went a short way toward meeting those actual needs. In a memo I wrote after the first meeting, I mused:

> I think there is going to be a lot of value in getting teachers together across tasks that they are administering – the value added is going to be in the conversations – I really hope I can document these – *creating cross school communities will be a huge boon to this work, and hopefully have meaningful implications beyond just the CPAS work. Teachers need more communities to talk about students and*

supporting student work, outside of their own schools. (Appendix B, emphasis added)

This knowledge and reflection provided a necessary framework as I sought to repurpose the nature of the role and act upon my perceived need for change.

After the first semester, once I established footing in my own role, I sought to actively shift the role of the C-PAS coordinator. In January, I spoke with The Urban Assembly network leader and proposed we increase the meetings in the spring to purposefully extend the role of the C-PAS Coordinator. I argued that by giving teacher-leaders support and autonomy in managing the complexity of this work we could better meet the needs of the students and teachers engaging with the assessment. I advocated for a minimum of three meetings to allow for a new kind of role that supported teacher conversations of an instructional nature, and growth across time. The move from one to three meetings was a shift I hoped was responsive to the need for increased communication I felt and heard, as well as research on professional learning communities that suggests that lasting impact is best created through ongoing work. Another goal in advocating for additional meeting time was to shift these meetings from the "transactional" feel they had previously had to using the time to explore and support the struggles in doing the instructional and administrative support work that is inherent in the job. The network leaders acquiesced, and I began the process of conceiving a three meeting arc for the work in the spring.

Though much of the formal support was articulated through these meetings, there was another, less clearly defined mode of support that was delivered in through my own individual work with the teacher-leaders in this role. Over the course of the first year of

the work, I developed working relationships that allowed me to provide the kind of targeted support that I hope somehow makes the work easier by providing frequent email communication, offering myself for school visits, and being vigilant about follow-up with questions and concerns. My anecdotal understanding of this less formal support was that the primary purpose it served was to make the coordinators feel "heard" in their frustrations. According to the Harvard Business Review "Buy-in can be a simple matter of being heard" (Harvard Business Review, April 2009, p. 101). I took to heart this maxim, and tried – whenever possible – to provide a space to hear concerns and ask questions toward solving them to the best of my ability.

Negotiating a New Purpose for the Work

With a stated objective of helping teachers to support the work of using Key Cognitive Strategies in the instruction at their own schools, and an implicit objective of creating a community across schools, the three meetings drew upon the resources and language of professional learning communities. The objectives that guided the meetings were as follows:

- February Meeting: How can we best support the purposeful use of Key Cognitive Strategies at our schools?
- March Meeting: I can use strategies and resources to support teachers and students around implementing C-PAS at our schools.
- April Meeting: I can identify and strategize around a particular area to support for the teachers at my school. I can use the outcomes from previous meetings to support my thinking in this area. (Appendix D)

Since this was a work in progress, the plans for the April meeting were not set in February. This is reflected even in the shifting language around the outcomes. Since I hoped to provide an organic "flow" from one meeting to the next, and create an experience that was responsive to the prior meetings and needs of the teachers in the community, the work of each meeting drew upon the outcomes of the prior meeting, and the work was grounded in an attempt to create learning experiences that would help inform the instructional support of the teacher-leaders in the group when they returned to their schools.

The February meeting looked at the need for instructional supports for the assessment, and asked the teacher-leaders to identify the supports teachers at their school might use with students in order to support the key cognitive strategies. Since the conversations we had throughout the first semester demonstrated to me that teaching cognitive strategies, rather than content or skill, was still a new way of planning for many teacher-leaders, this meeting helped to isolate the work of the assessment, as well as liberate the cognitive strategies from being exclusively linked to the assessment. The meeting was structured with the hopes of taking the strategies out of isolation, and teachers shared ways they might support the key cognitive strategies in the context of their already existing work.

At this meeting teachers first saw a video of a teaching tool two teachers within the network were using to support understanding of a key cognitive strategy that students struggle with, and then worked in heterogeneous groupings across their subject area and grade level to create lists of the supports they or their school used to support a particular key cognitive strategy. Teachers were then encouraged to view the different techniques

that emerged and talk about how they might be used in their own school. Finally a resource list was generated from the meeting, which was emailed out to all the participating teachers. (Appendix D, Appendix E)

During this meeting there were some undercurrents of frustrations that bubbled to the surface when teachers were talking across schools, shared areas in which teachers either struggled with the task, or struggled with helping their colleagues find a way into these practices. In response to this, the March meeting was structured to examine forms of resistance to the work, and asked teacher-leaders to identify the barriers that prevented students from being successful in this work. In a parallel working group it asked the group to find the barriers of teacher resistance to this work. We then talked as a whole group and identified similarities between the two roles.

One of the extraordinary moments in the March meeting came when we used the microlab protocol (Appendix D) to open up conversations about the work the teacher-leaders had been doing in their school. There was an outpouring of positive response to this protocol, with teachers indicating that it had been a highlight of the meeting, and that they might try it with their own staff. (Appendix D, Appendix E)

The April meeting asked for teachers to generate issues that existed at their schools and meet in collaborative work groups to discuss those issues and possible next steps in thinking about them. The groups were formed based on their responses to the question: "What is the one thing that you would like to work on/change at your school with regards to CPAS?" From there, I formed small working groups where teachers discussed shared difficulties across school sites. (Appendix D, Appendix E)

This final meeting had a different tone than the prior two, in large part, I believe, because the group had begun to form cohesiveness as relationships formed. Teachers recalled other teachers' problems from previous meetings, and could talk across shared experiences around texts and identify mutual points of departure. The familiarity and the shared opportunities to talk had created a more collegial atmosphere, based on both my observations and the feedback that teachers provided. By the final meeting, based on the feedback from my interviews, and what I observed anecdotally, I sensed there emerged a new normal for the communication and shared ideas in the meetings.

Classroom Culture vs. School Culture

In response to a question about what techniques teachers were bringing back to their schools, I learned through teacher-reporting that while the teacher-leaders generally felt that they had used the techniques and ideas that we discussed at the February meeting *in their classrooms,* they often did not feel that the work had translated to their wider school community. For the teachers gathered the work we did in that same meeting demonstrated that it was easy to identify sources of frustrations and solutions for students, but more difficult to find answers using the same protocol to identify solutions for unmet needs with teachers. In the collected notes from the student element of this review (reproduced below from Appendix E), it is clear the teachers had great ability to identify frustrations, and to name the source of the frustrations for students:

Student Frustrations/Challenges	Unmet need/lagging skill
-Working independently -Perception that they lack the skills to complete the task	-The stamina to do extended work -Problem-solving skills (academic) How to cope with the frustration of not

	completing a task (non academic)
-How to manage their time to complete the tasks -Frustrated by changes in routines and general classroom practices -Frustration with non-traditional assessment	-Time management -prioritization -organization -Effective reading strategies Identifying and evaluating legitimate sources

As this list demonstrates, the teachers were adept at finding and isolating frustrations and lagging skills and even naming the impetus for those frustrations. Through their collective brainstorming process, the teachers were able to name the skills and brainstorm solutions. In the case of the group of teachers asked to identify a similar set of unmet needs for their colleagues the work was more challenging.

Teacher Frustration/Challenge	Unmet need
-Pressure of content to cover vs. time of administering CPAS ("depth v. breadth) -Variety of CPAS tasks (lack in MS math, probability and statistics –only early, not advanced) -Grading time Need for extra rubrics Can there be only one rubric? -Connection to teacher content - rubrics don't reflect classroom teaching -Need to create scaffolds (time) -is it still an assessment if it is very scaffolded? -Constant changes from EPIC -Communication with administration -for example: clarity around per-session	-We wonder: can the curriculum be KCS aligned, not Regents aligned? Can we transition from the Regents to the KCS? -Clarity of expectations for final products

payment -built in PD time -Expectations School administration v. UA v. EPIC v. State -Scheduling shared time -What's the big picture of this work?	

Perhaps some of the empty space on the second list is due to time constraints of the meeting, but these problems (for example the problem of who sets the expectations for curriculum and the conflicting demands of various interests) require the kind of systems thinking that allows teachers to look outside of their own school and wear several hats at once. Enmeshed in the individual culture of an individual school, it may be hard to generalize about these experiences and find solutions without sustained practice. It was clear to me that this final meeting had only just opened the conversation about critical instructional issues that surround the work.

Findings

Teacher-Leaders Report Back: What the Process Felt Like

One success that I am clearly able to report is that I did manage to chance conceptions of the role of C-PAS Coordinator across the cohort. All of my interview subjects reported a noted transformation in the purpose and clarity of the role. As Eliza[1], explained:

> I think, last year, I don't know how certain I was even what my role as coordinator was last year… my principal said, "Oh you can be coordinator, you'll be fine at it, all you have to do is share emails and occasionally go to a meeting." So I didn't really understand completely what my role was. So I did a lot last year, of just relaying information of – this is when things have to be done by, this is how you register for tasks, I did a lot of that kind of stuff. I don't – I did plan with people, but I don't know, I don't know that it was any different than it would have been if I were just teaching, aside from my relaying information

This sentiment was echoed by Danielle, who explained the arc of her 3 years in the role in the following way:

> Partway through the end of [my first year of teaching]… the assistant principal came over to me… and said, "You're gonna be the C-PAS coordinator. I need someone to do this for UA, and you did a project, right?" and I said yeah. I still didn't know that much about it. I had done a project and I had seen the website and that was about the extent of it, I'd

[1] The names of all interview subjects have been changed.

> been teaching for one year. So I went to some meetings at the UA, got, like, dates and stuff to give to people and… we didn't really do any tasks, I think only like a few people did, we didn't really score them online… Year two of my CPAS experience… all I really did was, I went to meetings and got dates on when things were due, and just brought that back to my team, we didn't really meet the deadlines, very few people did tasks, my principal wasn't really pushing it in any way it was just like, kinda, she said, "well we have to do it" but if you said, "oh I can't really fit this in" she said don't worry about it… Then *this year* the coordinator got a whole different position, we were actually working more on the tasks and how to support teachers in doing the tasks and less on administrative stuff in a way.

Though Eliza and Danielle both confirmed the success of the meetings in shifting the attention and emphasis of the role, I do not have the evidence that the shift in the role necessarily had strong implications at every school that sent a representative to the meetings.

The connection between teachers reporting on the use of the strategies (largely in their own classroom) and the relative difficulty of naming the unmet needs of teachers at the March meeting, reminded me that neither my working group, nor many of the schools themselves had provided the teacher-leaders with training around facilitating and supporting groups of adults. This realization led me to speculate that teacher leaders are not prepared to execute on instructional leadership roles without both external support and structural changes within their school that allows for those changes. Some of this was

reflected in the feedback I received in my interview process. One teacher-leader, Danielle, when asked to reflect on her role as C-PAS Coordinator over the course of the year, highlighted the need for structural changes:

> The technical aspects [of finding time to work with teachers] need to not be a fight, the administrative aspects need to not be a fight. There needs to be built in time in the school day or the PD time to work on KCSs and instructional time.

I had, informally, had similar observations and these observations make me invested in moving forward with the meetings in a way that supports facilitation training and structural support for these teacher-leaders.

However, the lack of opportunity to work effectively with peers was not only structural in nature. Teacher-leaders needed more opportunity to facilitate groups and build capacity as leaders around difficult conversations with peers as well. As Rachel explained,

> I think a little more training might be useful. It's actually something I've talked to my principal about, like again, this role, this C-PAS coordinator role is so similar to so many other kinds of roles teachers are asked to fill, including for me, being my department coordinator… I guess what I'm saying is if some kind of training with role playing and that kind of thing about having these conversations was part of the CPAS coordinator training or something in September, then it would benefit the people who participated in many more ways then – because I feel like the same people tend to fill leadership roles and so I just think it's a way to help people in a variety of ways beyond C-PAS.

Rachel, like others in this role, understood that some of the complexity arrived from a need to step outside of her own role as a teacher and extend her skill set to facilitation and training. Being an instructional leader requires a particular kind of learning and, in turn, the meetings that attempt to groom these teachers-leaders into this role need to provide a framework for that learning.

The Work Continues to Evolve

Over the course of the three meetings, my understanding shifted from believing that it was important to find ways to communicate *through* teachers-leaders across schools about the work of the performance assessment to knowing that the real work was in communicating *between* teachers about the performance assessment. That is, the impact that our meetings had was largely demonstrated in the classrooms of the teachers I worked with and was orchestrated by providing opportunities for teacher-to-teacher conversation. According to Rachel, a teacher-leader I interviewed:

> I don't know how much those meetings helped me to be a better CPAS coordinator *this year*, but I definitely felt like they helped me to be a better CPAS administrator with my own students and just a better teacher in general, because the people who were there were just smart involved thinking people… I wanted to talk more about instruction in general with them, you know, because they just seemed like the kind of people I could get ideas from…

As Rachel describes, the cross teacher communication had an impact on her own classroom practice that extended beyond the practice of administering the performance based assessment into her daily classroom practice. She found a benefit in the community

of teachers, in sharing ideas and communicating across schools with "smart involved thinking people."

As I realized that the work was changing, the meetings themselves changed shape to address the shifting role. After the more open format of the first meeting ("open" relative to the transactional meetings that had proceeded it) had allowed conversations to flourish, it seemed clear that the second meeting needed to address those conversations. Since many of the conversations had been about frustrations, I tried to structure the second meeting to hear and address those frustrations. At this point, I stumbled into a fortuitous conversation with a colleague, who works with teachers around addressing the social-emotional needs of their students. After I described some of the tensions inherent in the work, he and I collaborated to on the second meeting. Once it became "okay" to let the emotional needs and frustrations of the teachers into the conversation, the nature of the work changed. In some ways, I felt that this meeting paved the way for more open communication between the teachers, and allowed for the more open conversations that followed in the subsequent meeting.

Responses to the Changing Role

The way that the work shifted to create space for increasingly honest conversations over the course of the three meetings was well received by my interview subjects. As noted earlier, Danielle, when asked about how the role was different this year as opposed to her previous years as a C-PAS Coordinator, described the shift from compliance to conversation, when she said "Then *this year* the coordinator got a whole different position, we were actually working more on the tasks and how to support

teachers in doing the tasks and less on administrative stuff in a way…" she reflected the real observation of not only the shift in the role, but the way that the change in intention of the meetings affected a change in the conversation ("how to support teachers").

Danielle's changed experience reflects the shifting nature of the role, and speaks to the general arc of the work over the last three years. Her experience also demonstrates how the change in meetings helped her to consider that some of her work in this role was around supporting teachers at her school.

We can see the same pattern of the teacher-leaders changing roles reflecting on their work with the other teachers in their school in Eliza's interview as well:

> For me, the buy in came when I kind of realized what the point of it was. When I first started doing CPAS, I was kind of told, "this is a project that we do, and these are the projects, these are the assignments that you can do, and here's how you do it," … and I didn't see the point because we didn't really debrief about it afterwards, we didn't analyze the data, it was just this project that someone else told us we had to do, and we did it. As I got more into it… I started more and more seeing how this could be used and I started seeing how it didn't necessarily – I could fit it into what I was already teaching pretty easily, and I think that has been the big selling point to people on the staff is, like, as they see the point of it, as they see, like, you know you can use this in your curriculum, you can use this as an authentic assessment.

Eliza discuses the evolution of moving from a place where she was mandated to do the work, to a place where she took ownership of the work, and how that, for her an opening

point in the conversation that helped her bring the work to her colleagues. She explains that her staff has taken up and wrestled with the issue of scaffolding, due to her own transformation in thinking around these questions:

> What's gone well is that I, and much of the staff, much of the English department, we've begun to take out most of the scaffolds, and we've seen our students do more independently, and their capable of doing stuff where a couple of years ago I would think, "they just can't do this without huge amounts of support" and now they can.

In another interview, Rachel echoed the sentiment of the role and the wide-view fostering a change around her own practice in her interview:

> I had always bought into CPAS but there was, the aspect of it that I was a little like, "I don't know if they know what they're talking about" was just, like, give it to your kids without scaffolding, essentially. Have them do it independently. But when I became a C-PAS coordinator [this year] I sort of felt like, well I have to walk the walk now, you know. I have to do this. And I became intrigued with the idea of it as an experiment, like, okay, let's see if this works. And so that's how I did it in the Fall. I just gave it to the kids. But it was because I was C-PAS coordinator that I felt like, I have to really do this, I cannot fake this.

Rachel explains how the shift toward independence affected her practice and in turn her ability to support other teachers in her school when they became interested in trying on the same practice, and how this aspect of her work allowed her to support other members of her department in this process. Thus, for both Rachel and Eliza the work was relevant

to their own practices, and both attempted to communicate and support their colleagues in implementing similar changes. Eliza was able to draw a direct connection between the work of the meetings and this transformation in her own school, and even mentions Rachel's choices around scaffolding, which were shared at one of the meetings:

> I think this year I've gotten much more interested in the process, in like, how we can change the process of administering C-PAS and I think that going to the meetings has been more helpful to me this year, and part of it is because I think the meetings themselves have been much more organized and together, um, I felt like in the past last year there was a lot more, "this is what we're going to be focusing on this meeting," and looking for common strategies, and it's been very helpful talking to other people within the network, finding out what they're doing that's working. I mean, I was really inspired hearing from [Rachel] that she doesn't scaffold whatsoever… and yes [her students are] older than my students, but I want my students to get to that point in 12th grade where they can do that and do it well, and they're not that far from it now, which is really great. So that's been a huge thing is just looking at that whole process and how we can streamline it, for one thing, just like, to make it easier for everybody and also to make it more valuable for the kids, and more of an authentic assessment. So I've done a lot of that and a lot of, kind of, promoting that with the teachers.

Overall, the interviews supported my more anecdotal sense that the public forum for conversation about the work provided the coordinator cohort with a new way of thinking

about supporting the teachers at their school, as well as new understandings about the possibilities of the performance assessment. Although this was only a small sampling, the conversations at the meetings seemed to reflect a real need for answer seeking outside of individual school communities. As Eliza's interview indicated, the teachers gravitated toward their colleagues who could report on and show evidence of the strategies they were using to help move their students toward independence.

Lessons Learned

One clear flaw of my process was not communicating, or indeed, ever fully articulating for myself, the distinction between a "meeting" and "professional development." This issue was an outgrowth of the problems that evolved from the change in the role. Navigating turning what once really was a meeting – transactional in nature – into a professional development or space for teachers to share ideas, was tricky, because I had to manage changed expectations. For me, one of the lessons learned here, particularly after the February meeting (the first of the "new meetings") was that it is important to make my intentions explicit.

The challenge of changing an existing entity into something else is a massive second-order challenge, and I have found that the only way to counteract this challenge is to be transparent about the changes that are occurring and ask the patience and understanding of the teacher-leaders I am working with. I hope that by modeling this kind of flexibility, teachers can take up the helm when they take on this role with their colleagues.

Another struggle is the ongoing tension between the administrative elements of the role and the transformation I was trying to make toward having the role be more instructional and supportive in nature. As previously discussed, the role was once about completing a list of administrative duties. However, in practice the role called upon a more diverse skill set and required a kind of instructional finesse to be done successfully. Even a seemingly simple task such as helping teachers select tasks from the task bank, requires a detailed knowledge of curriculum and instruction, and for the teacher taking on the role to hold a collaborative coaching stance relative to their colleagues.

With this in mind, I was often frustrated to confront the reality that changing the intention behind the role does not eliminate the administrative checklist, so, while it is seems to be a positive shift to acknowledge the more nuanced nature of the work, the meetings still did not intentionally attend to the difficulties that exist in asking a classroom teacher to perform duties that are both administrative and instructional in nature. In short, I still need to answer the question of how to support teachers as they navigate the role between being colleagues and being accountable for administrative compliance from their co-workers. This challenge gets at the core of how formal and informal roles are defined and delineated in a school community. As Rachel explained,

> I felt like, "ah! Okay, I look bad because my teachers are not doing what they are supposed to be doing and I have to get *on them.*" And that's an area where I feel like some more training would have been useful for me… because I'm not their supervisor but I am a little bit on the hook when they don't do what they're supposed to do.

Rachel describes her frustration with not being comfortable taking on the role of compliance "enforcer" and not having the tools or support to address this. This notion was echoed in Danielle's interview as well, where she described the administrative role as the "hardest part" because she did not have a plan of action for when teachers did not meet deadlines in the appropriate time.

The struggle around shifting the role away from compliance, while at the same time needing these technically administrative elements to take place was apparent throughout the work. This was compounded by the disconnect of having the administrative elements linked to the monetary compensation that teachers leaders were receiving for the role, a shifting amount over the course of the work, that averaged to about $650.00 a semester, and was explicitly linked with administrative duties, due to the high need for online recording and data gathering from a large scale perspective. This automatically placed value on the administrative duties over the less easily codified work that teachers might engage in with their colleagues to support them around instructional choices.

For example, Danielle described actually writing a task to complete with her co-workers who could not find anything appropriate to serve their population. Obviously, this is a nuanced and supportive response to a teacher struggling with something new. However, this is not where her compensation for the role was, and it did not rise to the immediate forefront as she described what was difficult about "the work." This leads me to conclude that, for her, "the work" still felt like completing the checklist. And well it should, if this is where the monetary compensation lies and where the email reminders she is receiving are focused.

Thus, the tension I faced, and continue to struggle with, is how to fully repurpose the role to place an emphasis on the unnamed elements of instructional support that these teachers provide, while at the same time, making sure the other elements, which remain important to the functional administrative side of the assessment, do get completed. This problem is clearly a facet of a dilemma that many, if not all, school leaders face. It is not a problem I can easily solve, but one that I hope to continue to actively wrestle with to come to a more fruitful conclusion than what presently exists.

Personal Reflections: My Own Growth as a Learner and Leader

My own development is evinced in the changing nature of this project. Since I was stepping into a new leadership role, for me the evolution of the work went hand-in-hand with my own leadership development. I had to learn a great deal about myself in order to let the work change and develop and to welcome the changes as they occurred, even when they felt like a departure from my expectations and plans. I had to let go of my need to control the situation and prescribe the learning or outcomes before the process had occurred. I had to purposefully take my own voice out of the equation to allow for other voices to come through and value them without judgment.

Another important change in my development as a leader and adjusting to the work was the realization that the process *was* the work. That is, it was important for me to live with the understanding that the work could be re-purposed and change over time, and to accept this as part of the process. Because the project changed so significantly over the course of the year, I had to allow myself the freedom to listen and hear and adjust.

This work was also an exercise in listening to myself – so, for example, when I realized that the work was shifting toward emphasizing teacher-to-teacher communication and de-emphasizing some of the work that teacher-leaders would take back to their own schools, I was able to let myself make the change and structure the meetings accordingly.

Making changes in process, especially as a person new to a leadership role, is a difficult undertaking. To make a change is to acknowledge to yourself that you do not know everything, that – in some measure – you got it "wrong." I firmly believe that experienced leaders hold the tension of having a direction and a vision and allow that vision to shift and grow in a dynamic relationship; but believing this is one thing, and living it in a nascent leadership role is quite another. I had to let go of some ego to take in the changes and remind myself that this was the right choice.

The process of finding the dynamic tension between vision and change was significant both for my own professional and personal growth, and also in the way that it provides a parallel to the rest of the work. The dynamism reflects the work of the teacher leaders in relation to supporting the teachers with navigating assessment literacy, and the teacher's role in relation to guiding the students through the assessment itself. The process of learning to see myself as a facilitator of growth-experiences is pertinent to all aspects of the work, and remains one of the most significant learnings for me, a learning that will have applications across my career in education.

The evolution of this project has had a steep learning curve for me. It is one thing to talk about teachers as the center of their own learning, and quite another to execute it. I continue to believe that adults learn and grow best through conversation with each other, and that the center of my project is not only around the culture shift to performance

assessment, but also about honoring the knowledge of teacher leaders as the best source of shared knowledge. In acknowledging this as an essential part of the project, I had to confront the way that the direction of the work can be fluid in nature and not totally known in advance. Perhaps the largest piece of adult learning in this work, and in the work moving forward, was my own.

Implications and Next Steps

It is clear to me that my next steps in this work are to use the foundation that was created this year as a springboard for an ongoing plan for collaborative inquiry. Through conversation with the teachers and my own observations, I see that the work needs to merge into a true teacher-lead collaboration around the questions that emerged in the meetings. Through sharing facilitation responsibility as they engage in collaborative inquiry, I hope to provide an environment where teacher-leaders will have the opportunity to become fluent in facilitation and troubleshoot around shared problems as they continue to engage with their newfound leadership roles.

The structure of a professional development series that really engages teachers in cross-school *conversation* (as opposed to one-off content based professional development) will be relatively new for our network. While The Urban Assembly has been a huge advocate of this kind of conversation *within* schools, the attention to building an intra-network conversation has not been as strong. The network has structures in place for this kind of communication across school leadership (for example, we use an Instructional Rounds model with our Principals and Assistant Principals), but opening the conversation up to teachers to communicate and share best practices across schools, has

not been an ongoing practice, and seems like the next logical step in the work. A collaborative professional learning community will allow teachers a space to address their own issues with the work, rather than an externally mandated set of questions or challenges. And, as with any group inquiry into a problem, teachers will have the opportunity to learn and grow from the problems that their colleagues face as well

Thinking of the structural supports in place for leadership, it is clear to me that another implication is that to change work in schools this work needs to spread beyond individual teachers to be in conversation with school leadership. The teachers in my interviews were often unclear about the role of their school leadership in the process, and this was an ongoing theme at the meetings as well. Teacher-leaders were cognizant of the tensions inherent in not being sure where their own work was situated in relation to their school leaders. I believe this dialogue can not continue without bringing leadership into this conversation and asking them to engage in the same questions and conundrums that their teacher-leaders and teachers are wrestling with.

Conclusions

As already indicated, the teachers I spoke to felt the work of the coordinator meetings had an impact on their own classroom practice. As Eliza said in talking about her transformation in the work, "Speaking to other teachers and hearing some things that they could do was very helpful… there were giant gaps [in what I did] or there were very low expectations… I think going to the meetings and just discussing what the process looks like was helpful." For Eliza, the work with other teachers helped open up the lens by which she judged the quality of student work, the baseline expectations for performance, and a general understanding of the content of the performance assessment. There was also an ongoing theme of the shift toward *student independence* that evolved from the work. Thus, the outcome of pushing teachers toward a deeper understanding of the elements of performance assessment, particularly the element of performance assessment that calls for student independence, was successful. But a change in individual practice does not a change in culture make, though it is a start.

Overall, the teachers I interviewed reported that the work had an impact on their own classrooms, but universally felt that it was a struggle to bring the work to their wider school community. Looking across the schools, and listening to the interviews, I learned that while the teacher-leaders did feel that their role as coordinators had *some* impact on the teams they worked with, they universally concluded that they needed additional support in creating a space for the work in their schools, particularly around facilitation and fostering change in their work with their colleagues. In the next iteration of this

work, it will be important to build capacity with regard to facilitation and teacher-support.

Another emerging theme is that some aspects of this school level change must he systematic in nature. In order to make a change across a school community, we have to engage the school leadership and all of the key players. The teachers, struggling to do this work without an internal support network, felt stymied, and limited by a lack of opportunities to bring the work to their wider school community. Changes that will engage the wider school community need to be structural in nature, and the kind of structural changes that this work calls for must necessarily engage leadership as a key player.

The work of changing school cultures across a network is an ambitious undertaking. For me, the work in my new role with an outstanding group of teacher-leaders was an incredible journey. The opportunity to look across schools and notice shared value sets and where they differed broadened my own understanding about cultures within and across schools. I have grown as a leader as I have struggled to create space for teachers-leaders to find their own answers through conversation with each other.

As I watched the work change and evolve over the course of the year and applied a meta-cognitive stance to my own role in the process I also learned a great deal about myself. The work helped me to consider changing roles and how to support growth into leadership positions. I know now that wholesale structural support needs to be carefully enacted to provide teachers with the space, time and resources to engage in cross-network conversation around assessment and best practices. I also understand that the process is

not immediate, but gradual. I know that the work of school change is secondary to supporting the needs of individuals, and I firmly believe that teacher conversation is the most effective way to support those needs. And, perhaps most importantly, I understand the nature of my own role within this work, and that I must carefully monitor myself, making sure that I am able to step in and out appropriately to provide teacher leaders with space to come to their own understandings.

At the time of this writing, I have already begun enacting the next steps in this process. This year's coordinator meetings are named explicitly as a professional learning space and they provide opportunities for small working groups to come together around shared inquiry questions about student independence and critical thinking. In these groups, my role recedes, and my job is only to provide support as teacher-leaders learn to facilitate and share artifacts from their teaching. The thinking that has begun to emerge around shared practices across schools leaves me buzzing with energy and excitement after every meeting. And I can see in this work the intermingling of all the work that came before it, from my own *aha!* moment as a junior in high school, my struggles as a first year teacher, and my shifting understanding of my own role in supporting a network of teacher leaders towards a common goal.

John Dewey, in his transformative text, *Education and Experience,* notes that, "experiences, in order to be educative, must lead out into an expanding world of subject-matter, a subject-matter of facts or information, and of ideas." (Dewey, 1938, p. 87) I hope, in this work, that I have successfully built upon my own experience, and the experiences and research of those who addressed these ideas before me, in order to enact what Dewey ultimately asks of educators: that is, to create experiences and environments

for learning to take place, for both teachers and students to embark upon a seminal journey into the ever expanding world of ideas.

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The College-Ready Performance Assessment System

WHAT IS C-PAS?

The College-Ready Performance Assessment System (C-PAS) is an innovative assessment developed in collaboration between The Urban Assembly and Dr. David Conley of the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC). Conley, author of *College and Career Ready*, developed the C-PAS system to assess Key Cognitive Strategies that research shows lead to college success. The Key Cognitive Strategies are Problem Formulation, Research, Communication, Interpretation and Precision.

The Urban Assembly partnered with EPIC to create and administer this assessment so that teachers receive meaningful feedback on the college readiness of Urban Assembly students.

C-PAS GOALS

The goal of C-PAS is to ensure that students enter post-secondary education prepared for the expectations they will encounter. Using an online system, teachers access tasks and scoring guides that allow them to evaluate students on Key Cognitive Strategies and core content knowledge.

C-PAS tasks ask students to meaningfully apply knowledge, behaviors, and skills in an authentic context. Thus, another goal is designing instruction to support these skills. Teachers in Urban Assembly schools administer the assessment as a part of their curriculum and use the data to inform their future planning.

C-PAS DATA SUPPORTS MEANINGFUL INSTRUCTION

C-PAS assessment results yield valuable data for use by teachers, administrators, students and parents. The scores generated by C-PAS help educators as they consider how their curriculum and instruction helps students to perform on college ready skills. Students and parents benefit by better understanding progress toward college readiness.

The Urban Assembly has created and implements strategies to respond to these data, including systems for scoring, examining data, and using that data to revise curriculum planning and instruction. The work has radically changed instructional design and execution across the network.

Memo
July 2010

In my own experience with administering PBAs and working with other teachers to facilitate the administration of PBAs, I have noticed a real reluctance around the adaptation of the practice of this kind of testing. Now, whether this springs from an unwillingness to dive into this kind of assessment or a resistance to the specific *way* we do this work in our network (the locus is around a cumbersome early model of what may one day attempt to be a more sleek and standardized PBA) is difficult to parse out. My own personal pushback came less from the *kind* of work we were doing and more from the specificity of the requirements for the C-PAS (College-readiness Performance Assessment System – a very specific, detailed, still-working-out-the-kinks, lab-made PBA from the brains of EduGuru David Conley). The arc of my changing relationship to this work, came, for me, out of a shift in my own knowledge base about the work itself. Once I was able to see, in a broad way, the implications for this work in a large-scale sense, I became more willing to creatively problem-solve my way through the kinks of the work. This also sprung from my shift into being more of an "insider" in the process: working closely with the folks at the network who both lauded my efforts and also gave me more of a conceptual framework for the work. When I was a cog in the machine of this process ("This is just a test Urban Assembly says we have to get done, do it the easiest way possible for you, Alexis") I had no buy-in, nor any reason to believe that this work was more valuable than what I already had planned for my own classes. The shift came from being able to see "big-picture" which is incredibly difficult to do when you're in the mix and simply told, "this is a thing you need to do, it will take one month (!) of your teaching time, and you won't see tangible results from it for a while, if ever."

The assumptions I need to unpack more completely are around the adaptation process that teachers have to this work (is everyone's like mine? what if they never get the "insider" revelation feeling that I had? how can they be given that sooner? is this a process that always takes time to "come around" to or can it be expedited for some people?) and about the adaptation process at large. How does large-scale educational reform come about? Is it always top-down (as I assume) or can it start more grassroots (ala progressive education, the Bank Street model) and force its way to the top?

Memo
September 2010

The group was huge! My follow through with emailing and bugging ACs to get the information really paid off. I am proud of the work I did. I'm also glad that the meeting was planned not to be a boring just delivery of administrative tips – on the other hand, I worry that there was some important stuff that didn't get covered. For example, I think we should have talked more about the new tasks – the truth is, I've been so busy that I'm not as conversant in them as I'd like to be – so I really need to spend some time with the tasks. I think this is one of the first tasks of network level folks – being really conversant in what the tasks entail and how they can best be supported. In particular, how long do they usually take and what level of scaffolding is necessary. Also, are there any tools or tricks that can help teachers that are task specific?

I think there is going to be a lot of value in getting teachers together across tasks that they are administering – the value added is going to be in the conversations – I really hope I can document these – creating cross school communities will be a huge boon to this work, and hopefully have meaningful implications beyond just the CPAS work. Teachers need more communities to talk about students and supporting student work, outside of their own schools.

One thing that was interesting in the coordinator meeting was that there was a bevy of APs there – I wonder if there is a different approach to administering on the school level if you are a teacher versus an administrator. I have always thought it was valuable to give this particular set of keys to the teachers in the interest of creating buy-in (it's easier to do something that a teacher asks you to do than an AP in some schools) but I wonder about the difference between this work as a top down movement versus a bottom up one (esp since it IS coming from the top down, no matter how you slice it because the network is the top). I obviously have a bias in this respect – that is towards the bottom up approach, but that is the nature of my beliefs about school reform – that building capacity among teachers to be instructional leaders and thoughtful collaborative groups is the best overall approach.

It's worth noting that in a conversation with [redacted] about why she was there (she is principal of her school) rather than a teacher she said she "didn't believe administrative tasks were leadership" she also said she didn't have any problems getting teacher buy-in around CPAS – that all her teachers were on board already. This is, perhaps, because she is at a new school and comes from [redacted] – the school that has been doing CPAS the longest – so from a deep CPAS background.

What else? I think the checklists are coming in well – that's just the result of being organized and email bombing everyone a million times. I think that's a take away – having a central person doing this work is helpful because then the work is, well, centralized. And it gets done.

Memo
January 2011

I want the process to be smooth for everyone I'm working with, but there is only so much I can do. This seems like as good a time as any to take stock of what I've done and what I'd like to work on further.

What I've done so far:

-Create C-PAS groups and email folks with their groups
-Create binders for coordinators
-Respond to all emails from coordinators promptly
-Go to schools to help whenever asked
-Create protocol for anticipating learner needs, student friendly rubric, and empty create- the-supports friendly rubric

What else could I do?

-get teachers actually sharing resources
-get teachers into each others classrooms
-make more actual resources to share (but how to get them in classrooms?)
-get teachers talking to each other about the hard stuff (create a space)
-provide opportunities to ask the hard questions
-let teachers tell me what they need

Roles and Responsibilities of C-PAS Coordinators

1. Meet all deadlines listed in C-PAS planning calendar

2. Assist teachers with online registration

3. Assist teachers with task administration questions

4. Provide deadlines and information to all teachers administering C-PAS

5. Meet with principal and achievement coach to coordinate deadlines around scoring and data implications meetings

See subsequent planning documents for more details

C-PAS Planning and Administration Tips

Prior to Task Administration

1. In selecting your C-PAS task, think purposefully about what the task is assessing and see if you can begin to build in some of the language and skills early. For example, if you refer to "problem formulation" throughout your early units, and ask students to identify what the problem is and create a hypothesis whenever you give them a task or prompt, you will save your students the trouble of adjusting to the new language when you arrive at the C-PAS.

2. (English Specific Tip) When calendaring out your task, remember that text-based tasks don't take into account reading the text in the time frame of the task.

3. Make sure your students understand that this unit is assessing the Key Cognitive Strategies, and that the rubric will look different than the kind of rubric they normally receive from you. This way, you can return them a paper copy of the C-PAS rubric, do some conscious teaching around it, and save the trouble of having to re-grade the C-PAS on an additional rubric.

4. Complete the task yourself prior to beginning the task with students. This is especially important for Math teachers as it helps identify areas of the task where students are likely to struggle, and helps make visible the various pathways to arriving at a solution.

5. Create a pacing calendar for the task administration that you share with students to help them track their own progress and keep track of deadlines.

During Task Administration

1. Create a folder for C-PAS that remains in the classroom and gets filled with all the assessed work products from the task.

2. Allow some of the class period at the end of the C-PAS unit to have the students put the documents in order. This will make the grading process much easier.

3. Xerox assessed work product handouts on brightly colored paper (preferably the same colored paper) throughout the unit. This way it's easy to separate

assessed work products from other supporting materials for both students working to catch up and teachers during scoring and feedback.

Collective Scoring Moderation

Rationale

Since much of our work in administering C-PAS concerns not only student achievement but also teacher practice; we have found that some of the most useful conversations about the work arise out of collective processes of scoring. Since many schools have successfully completed this work already, we have some suggestions for collective scoring and moderation that will assist with your school's process.

Reasons to Score Collectively

- The collective scoring option allows for a teacher team to gain faculty in assessing the C-PAS across grade levels. In many instances, it opens the door to conversations around expectations for content-area vertical alignment.
- Collective scoring allows for discussion and debate around the Key Cognitive Strategies, and helps the group gain clarity around what success looks like on the various levels of the Benchmark Standards.
- For teachers new to C-PAS, collective scoring also functions as a tutorial in how to score the assessment.
- Scoring can be overwhelming for individual teachers, sharing the responsibility helps make the process more manageable

Advice for Collective Scoring

- Create a dedicated scoring moderation time. Options for this include:

A teacher team meeting time, with some extra time added on -for example, if your teacher team meets in the afternoon, you may add lunch and an hour after school; if your teacher team meets in the morning, you may add lunch and an hour before school

A full school-day when teacher's from a content team have their classes covered in order to allow dedicated time for moderation.

Note: As the graphic to the left indicates, we have found this the most successful method for completing scoring moderations and getting a sizable chuck of scoring completed.

- Contact your achievement coach about facilitating the moderation
- Prepare student work for the moderation (see "Preparing Student Work for Scoring Moderation")

Data Implications Meetings

Rationale

Why administer C-PAS if there is never a chance to look thoughtfully at the results of the work and what it means for our students? Implications meetings allow us to look beyond our classroom to the work of our school community and discuss the implications of the C-PAS in terms of planning and designing our curriculums and future assessments. These meetings support the work we do in our curriculum reviews.

Reasons to Conduct an Implications Meeting

- Encourages a thoughtful conversation about student work across the team
- Allows a final reflection on the work of the C-PAS
- Opens the door to discuss planning implications for the upcoming semester
- Can provide a guiding question or Problem of Practice for a content area team

Advice for Implications Meetings

- Meet with your achievement coach to analyze and discuss the data from your C-PAS
- Schedule time with principal, achievement coaches and members of your department
- Conduct meeting facilitated by achievement coach using the Data Implications Protocol (see example)

Fall 2009 CPAS Data Review & Implications Protocols

Objectives:

- To become familiar with the data reports that CPAS generates, use them to generate initial conclusions, and develop questions to guide our process for looking at student work.
- To use student CPAS work samples to deepen our understanding of our students' strengths and areas of need with the Key Cognitive Strategies.
- To determine specific instructional implications that can guide teachers planning and/or teacher team practice during the spring semester.

Data Review Protocol

I. Welcome and introductions
   a. Review protocol and objectives for conversation
   b. Review norms for conversation *(share the air, no monopoly on expertise, respect, assume good intent, and support the role of the facilitator)*
   c. Identify a scribe and timekeeper for today's meeting

II. Looking at the data
   a. Distribute copies of the frequency counts and give initial explanation of how to read them. Allow for a few initial clarifying questions.
   b. Read data charts and have participants individually consider the following questions:
      i. What areas of strength does the data reveal about your students?
      ii. What areas of need does it suggest?
      iii. What questions about instruction does it raise for you?
   c. More clarifying questions after reading the data charts
   d. Working in pairs, or small groups, participants share their responses
   e. Large group share—each group shares it's thoughts and ideas
   f. Large group discussion
      i. Given what we've all shared, what new insights do you have about what this data suggests about our students, or our instruction?
      ii. What lingering questions do you still have?

III. Considering student work to examine

a. Given what we've discussed so far today, what question or area of need would we like to use to focus our process for looking at student work?
    i. What KCS and aspect(s) would we like to focus on?
    ii. Which portion(s) of the task are particularly important for us to examine?
b. Select 3 samples of student work to use for the LASW protocol
    i. Use the EPIC website to select students who's work scores in your target range, but who completed all elements of the task
    ii. If planning to look at student work in a separate meeting, assign someone to copy the student work samples for all participants.

Looking at Student Work (LASW) Protocol

I. Welcome, introductions and roles
    a. Review protocol and objectives for conversation
    b. Review norms for conversation *(share the air, no monopoly on expertise, respect, assume good intent, and support the role of the facilitator)*
    c. Identify a scribe and timekeeper for today's meeting

II. Reading the work
    a. Clarifying questions
    b. Quietly read individually

III. Describing the task and the student work—what do we see?
    a. Low inference, evidence gathering
        i. What is the student being asked to do?
        ii. What is the student actually doing?
    b. Scribe lists evidence on chart paper for all to see

IV. Interpreting the student work—what is the student thinking?
    a. Based on the evidence gathered in the last round, what was the student thinking? Why?
    b. Participants may ask questions to better understand each other's perspectives.

V. Implications for classroom practice—what implications do we see for teaching and assessment?
    a. Discuss the following with the group:

i. What did our conversation reveal to us about the specifics of how/where/with what our students are struggling?
ii. What impact does this have on how we should alter future assessments to make sure we are developing this skill in our students?
iii. What teaching strategies might be most effective at supporting our students in developing this skill?

b. Learning from the CPAS task itself
i. What kinds of prompts or suggested instructional moves did we see embedded in the CPAS task itself that may have implications for what we've discussed?

VI. Implications for spring CPAS administration
a. Based on what we've seen in looking at CPAS data, and student work samples, what KCSs and aspects should we assess as an ELA/Math department in our CPAS tasks this spring?

VII. Debrief
a. Review agreements arrived at today—specific assessment and instructional moves to use/explore, spring CPAS scoring guide
b. Feedback on the protocol(s)

Data Summary Spring 2010 [SAMPLE]

Comparing fall 2009 with Spring 2010 results

Percentage of ***total scores*** that fell into each category on the EPIC scoring guide fall '09 and spring '10

	Exceeds		Meets		Approaches		Initiates		Cannot Score	
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
ELA/Hum	1%	1%	10%	9%	25%	24%	24%	**31%**	40%	**35%**
Math/Sci	0%	0%	7%	**11%**	21%	**24%**	41%	**33%**	31%	32%

ELA/Humanities Summary

While overall results were fairly consistent across semesters, there were two changes of real note. The first is that there was a 7% gain in the number of scores of "initiates" in the spring. The second is that there was a 5% drop in the number of scores of "cannot score" in the spring. This is noteworthy because although on first glance it might seem that a rise in the number of scholars scoring initiates is a negative thing, it corresponded with an almost equally significant bump of scholars who were able to complete the task and receive scores. Whereas in the fall many more scholars failed to complete many portions of the task, in the spring, a far higher number completed it and we were able to gain some insight into their thinking and level of sophistication with the KCS.

Math/Science Summary

Overall results show some consistency across semester, but do revel several positive trends as well. First, there was a 4% gain in the number of scores in the "meets" category in the spring and then a 3% gain in "Approaches" category. This was paired with an 8% drop in scores in the "initiates" category and a minor 1% shift in scores of "Cannot Score." These changes indicate a positive trend in scholar performance as more scholars are meeting and approaching (a aggregate 7% gain) while far fewer are initiating and a consistent number are scoring cannot score.

Overall Summary

There are positive general trends across the content areas, though we have not yet reached the goal of having a critical mass of our scholars in the Exceeds, Meets and Approaches categories. In math/science we had 35% of our scholars score exceeds/meets/approaches this spring, whereas in ELA/humanities we had 34% of our scholars score exceeds/meets/approaches. This means just over 2/3 of our scholars are scoring either initiates, or cannot score. While we don't always know the reason scholars fails to complete a task, it is a strong indication that we have a significant number of scholars that are, for one reason or another, still unable to fully access the task and complete it in a way that shows their thinking.

Spring 2010 ELA/Humanities Summary Observations

1. The strongest area of performance this spring was on the Interpretation KCS. Not surprisingly we had a significantly lower number of scores of cannot score on this KCS as well (table 1). Interestingly, the scholars' performance on this KCS varies a great deal across the three aspects of Interpretation--Integrating, Analyzing and Synthesizing—(table 2).

Table 1: Comparing Interpretation to aggregate of all KCS

	Exceeds		Meets		Approaches		Initiates		Cannot Score	
	All KCS	Interp.	All KCS	Interp.	All KCS	Interp.	All KCS	Interp.	All KCS	Interp.
ELA/Hum	1%	1%	9%	10%	24%	26%	31%	**43%**	35%	**20%**

Table 2: comparison of aspects on Interpretation KCS

	Integrating		Analyzing		Synthesizing	
	Ex/M/App	Cant Score	Ex/M/App	Cant Score	Ex/M/App	Cant Score
ELA/Hum	49%	10%	36%	21%	26%	29%

2. We had large numbers of scholars scoring Cannot Score on Reasoning and Precision relative to all KCSs combined (table 1). Performance on reasoning was consistently poor, but the Critiquing aspect was a particular struggle as 83% of the scholars scored Cannot Score or Initiates on that aspect (compared to 68% on Organizing and 70% on Constructing).

Table 1: Percentages of scores of cannot score in each KCS assessed in spring 2010

	ALL KCS	Interpretation	Reasoning	Precision
ELA/Hum	35%	20%	45%	35%

3. The distribution of scores on the KCS Precision most closely resembled the distribution of all KCS combined. There was a spike in performance on Interpretation, and a significant dip in performance on Reasoning, and then a fairly average performance on Precision.

	All KCS					Precision				
	Exceed	Meet	Appr.	Init.	CantSc	Exceed	Meet	Appr.	Init.	CantSc
ELA/Hum	1%	9%	24%	31%	35%	1%	10%	27%	27%	35%

4. In general, the same trends were present in both 6/7 and in 8th grade tasks. Overall the performance of the 8th graders was lower than the 6/7th graders with fewer numbers of scores of Meets and Exceeds (5% vs. 13%) and larger numbers scoring cannot score (44% vs. 28%). All figures above include all scholars who were assessed in spring 2010.

Spring 2010 Math/Science Summary Observations

1. The strongest area of performance this spring was on the Problem Solving KCS. Not surprisingly we had higher numbers of scholars exceeding, meeting and approaching, and a significantly lower number of scores of cannot score on this KCS (table 1). Interestingly, the scholars' performance on this KCS varies a great deal across the three aspects of Problem Solving—Understanding, Hypothesizing, Strategizing—(table 2).

Table 1: Comparing Problem Solving to aggregate of all KCS

	Exceeds		Meets		Approaches		Initiates		Cannot Score	
	All KCS	ProbSol	All KCS	ProbSol	All KCS	ProbSol	All KCS	ProbSol	All KCS	ProbSol
Math/Sci	0%	0%	11%	17%	24%	30%	33%	45%	32%	8%

Table 2: comparison of aspects on Problem Solving KCS

	Understanding		Hypothesizing		Strategizing	
	Ex/M/App	Cant Score	Ex/M/App	Cant Score	Ex/M/App	Cant Score
Math/Sci	57%	7%	38%	10%	46%	8%

2. There was a major dip in the numbers of kids who scored Exceeds, Meets, or Approaches on the Reasoning KCS. Performance on Reasoning was consistently poor, but the Critiquing aspect was a particular struggle as 82% of the scholars scored Cannot Score or Initiates on that aspect (compared to 69% on Organizing and 67% on Constructing).

Table 1: Aggregate percentages of scores of Exceeds, Meets, or Approaches on each KCS

	ALL KCS	Problem Solving	Interpretation	Reasoning	Precision
Math/Science	35%	47%	33%	**27%**	34%

3. The distribution of scores on the KCS Precision most closely resembled the distribution of all KCS combined. There was a spike in performance on Problem Solving, and a significant dip in performance on Reasoning, and then a fairly average performance on Interpretation and Precision.

	All KCS					Precision				
	Exceed	Meet	Appr.	Init.	CantSc	Exceed	Meet	Appr.	Init.	CantSc
Math/Sci	0%	11%	24%	33%	32%	0%	10%	24%	34%	33%

4. In general, the same trends were present in both 6/7 and in 8th grade tasks. Overall the performance of the 8th graders was lower than the 6/7th graders with fewer numbers of scores of Meets or Exceeds (5% vs. 15%) but nearly identical percentages of Cannot Scores (33% vs. 32%). All figures above include all scholars who were assessed in spring 2010.

C-PAS Coordinator Meeting
February 14, 2011

Understanding Goal
How can we best support the purposeful use of Key Cognitive Strategies at our schools?

I. Introduction: What is Design Your Own Assessment **4:30 – 4:40**

Design Your Own Assessment and the Performance Based Assessment Initiative

II. Video from The [Redacted] **4:40 – 5:00**

Watch video
Discuss with a partner:

- *What strategies do the classroom teachers in this video use that support the Key Cognitive Strategy Research?*
- *What strategies do you use in your school or classroom that support the Key Cognitive Strategy Research?*

III. Identifying Strategies to Support KCSs with the new task language **5:00 – 5:40**

New Task Language – Changes & Rationale

Carousel activity with KCS language
Round 1

- Identify and explain the supports or tools already used in your classroom or school that you would use to support this KCS (i.e. note taking systems, classroom thinking routines, graphic organizers). Write your initials next to a strategy that exists at your school or in your classroom.

Round 2 (Rotate)

- At each station put a check next to systems you or your school currently use, underline a system you would like to try, and put a question mark next to a system that you are wondering about or would like to know more about

Round 3 (Rotate)

- Add any additional routines you would use that are not represented

IV. Administrative Items **5:40 – 5:50**

Review calendar and payment procedures, complete honorarium

V. Exit Ticket **5:50 -6:00**

C-PAS Coordinator Meeting
March 14, 2011

Understanding Goal
I can use strategies and resources to support teachers and students around implementing C-PAS at our schools

I. Introductions **4:30 – 4:40**

What was the best student question you heard in the last week?

II. Identifying Strategic Scaffolds Follow Up **4:40 – 5:00**

- Did you use any of the strategies from the last meeting at your school?
- Were there any specific needs around scaffolding that were addressed that you brought to your school community?
- What additional resources could or should we share with each other?

III. The Challenges of C-PAS: Identifying Struggles and Reasons **5:00 – 5:40**

a) Microlab **5:00 – 5:15**

See protocol on the other side of this paper

Round 1 (3min)

A positive experience you had with a teacher or a student around the C-PAS process

Round 2 (3min)

A learning experience or change in thinking you have had from your work administering C-PAS or as a C-PAS Coordinator

Round 3 (3min)

A challenge you have faced with doing this work, either with a teacher or a student

Open conversation in small groups (3 min)

b) Identifying Student and Teacher Needs for the C-PAS Process 5:15 – 5:40

Chart the connection between

- Teacher struggles and unmet needs (Alexis)
- Student struggles and unmet needs (Drew)

Share out

IV. Administrative Items **5:40 – 5:50**

Review calendar deadlines

Next Coordinator Meeting – **April 27, 2011 (Wednesday)**

V. Feedback
5:50 -6:00

C-PAS Coordinator Meeting
April 27, 2011

Understanding Goals:
I can identify and strategize around a particular area to support for the teachers at my school.
I can use the outcomes from previous meetings to support my thinking in this area.

I. Opening moves **4:30 – 4:50**
Share a powerful learning experience from when you were the age of the students you are teaching now.
-write for 2 minutes
-Popcorn

II. Review notes from previous meetings. **4:50 – 5:30**
In small groups, share which element is most relevant/resonant to you/your school/your practice at the moment, and why.

Micro-lab
Something you feel is resonant to your own practice
Something you think your team could use more support with.
What would it look like to take this work back to your school?

Open Conversation
What supports would you need?
What is the problem?
What makes it juicy or worthwhile?

III. Group Brainstorm **5:30 – 5:50**
How will this group look next year? What needs do you have that this work can fulfill?

IV. Logistics **5:50 – 6:00**
Review upcoming deadlines, etc.
Exit survey

Meeting Notes
February 14, 2011

We identified supports that are built into instruction that guide each of the key cognitive strategies

Problem Formulation

Hypothesize
guided questions (EH)
see/think/wonder (CR)
12 Questions (CR)
Discussion (EH)
Models of **final**? products (EH)

Strategize
models
strategy lists
strategy webs

Research

Graphic organizers: Brainstorm (K)
annotate the text (K)
Dialectical journals: textual support (AV)

Identify: annotation of the text (AV)

Collect: Choosing the appropriate quote (AV)

Interpretation

TP-CASTT (poetry)
DIDLS (prose)
graphic organizer explaining lit. techniques and their significance/effects (LT)

Literary techniqe	Content summary	Analysis
		*what does it imply about the character? *what does it imply about theme? *How does this relate to other techniques?

T	Topic
O	Opinion
R	Reasons
TS	**Thesis Statement**

(LT)

Cornell Notes (?)
Color code/categorize post-its (LT)
Dialectal journals (closer reading)
Syntax analysis
evidence/lines → grammar punctuation → how does this relate to theme? (LT)

venn diagram
gather evidence and synthesize in order to construct argument (LT)

Communication

Skeleton outline (LP)
Rough draft for reports (LP)
Peer review checklist with room for feedback (ML)
-peers or self highlight particular parts to identify where elements are present or absent (e.g pink =thesis, yellow = topic sentence, etc.)

have continuous access to digital version of their work for frequent revisions (DR)
-use google docs
-give students laptops
-create a wiki

Precision/Accuracy

Spell check (MG)
Peer edit – for content and grammar with rubric used across content areas (PD)
Check answer against alterative model (JF)
"Answer the question and question the answer" (PD)

C-PAS Coordinator Meeting Notes
March 14, 2011

I. Review of strategies from previous meeting

What we used from the last meeting:
Use of questioning (shared through talk with peers)
ELA /SS crossover techniques
Used KWL or PKN strategies at the start of problem formulation
KW**H** – H for Hypothesize
Reviewed teaching problem formulation with team

What we want:
More documents via email notes
cc Principals and administrators so that buy-in is shared

What we wonder:
How do we communicate across the network?
How do we share public documents?
How do we share public documents with administrators and teams?

II. Needs activity

Student Frustrations

Frustration/Challenge	Unmet need/lagging skill
Working independently	The stamina to do extended work
Perception that they lack the skills to complete the task	Problem-solving skills (academic) How to cope with the frustration of not completing a task (non academic)
How to manage their time to complete the tasks	Time management -prioritization -organization
Frustrated by changes in routines and general classroom practices	Effective reading strategies Identifying and evaluating legitimate sources
Frustration with non-traditional assessment	

Teacher/Staff Frustrations

Frustration/Challenge	Unmet need
Pressure of content to cover vs. time of administering CPAS ("depth v. bredth)	We wonder: can the curriculum be KCS aligned, not Regents aligned? Can we

	transition from the Regents to the KCS?
Variety of CPAS tasks (lack in MS math, probability and statistics –only early, not advanced)	Clarity of expectations for final products
Grading time Need for extra rubrics Can there be only one rubric?	
Connection to teacher content - rubrics don't reflect classroom teaching	
Need to create scaffolds (time) -is it still an assessment if it is very scaffolded?	
Constant changes from EPIC	
Communication with administration -for example: clarity around per-session payment -built in PD time	
Expectations School administration v. UA v. EPIC v. State	
Scheduling shared time	
What's the big picture point of this work?	

CPAS Coordinator Meeting Notes
April 27, 2011

1. We shared a powerful learning experience from when we were the age of our students

2. Then we reviewed the notes from the previous meetings, and tried to identify, individually, what the pressing or sticky issue was for us individually and at our schools.

D: issue of content vs. scaffolding
C: The issue at my school is the benchmark level tasks vs. appropriate curriculum issue, particularly in math. In humanities the issue is that there are not enough engaging tasks for ELA.
P: My issue is a tug-of-war between all the parties involved, I don't "buy" the content design argument, you need to take more time than the content standards anyway. The issue is that in reflection, teachers realize that students are not being asked to do that [the KCSs] all the time. We need to hold students accountable for this work.
D: Teachers at my school are buying into it more – that's not our issue as much as it used to be.
R: What about making it an independent project [as we've begun to do at our school]. A project done on the student's own time.

I asked, "what is the ONE THING that you would like to work on/change at your school with regards to CPAS?"
E: Alignment across grades (should be more to less scaffolding)
M: Meeting time to explore the issues
C: Getting useful instructional data
L: Common practice in the way that CPAS is administered (there would be more retention in the skill if the assessment was administered in the same way across classes).
J: Data. Using data to change instruction.
D: Teacher buy-in, helping teachers to see value, making data review an instructional practice
L: CPAS is not an issue that is on the table at meeting time. We need more clarity around the expectations – if CPAS is a priority then we should have more time devoted to it.
R: Using CPAS to inform instruction
P: Buy-in is our issue, but I want to find it through answering the question, "What is the place CPAS plays in the curriculum?" We need to make things [curriculum and assessment] whole.
K: Teachers taking CPAS seriously, treating it as a real assessment. Time during PDs. Helping the school understand KCSs.

3. We broke up into groups based on our problems, with the understanding that it would be valuable to create some action steps around addressing this work.
E & L (alignment)

- ➔ Need to create skill based Learning Targets by grade
- ➔ Need school level PD around the purpose of CPAS

- ➔ Need to provide completed models for teachers

D & P (buy-in)

- ➔ Teacher buy-in
- ➔ Need to work with team to integrate KCSs into curriculum
- ➔ Need support from UA -> Admin -> Teachers to explain the WHY behind a CPAS/KCS aligned curriculum

M, K, L (time and buy-in)

- ➔ Time/Buy-in
- ➔ Teachers need the time to build CPAS projects in early

J, R, C (use of data to inform instruction)

- ➔ J – need to schedule a data meeting at her school
- ➔ R – horizontal work – wants to talk with admin about meeting across grade teams to look at grade level data

4. I shared some critical upcoming dates

5/13 – HS admin suggested close date
6/10 MS admin close date (absolute close date for everyone)
Information on scoring to follow.

Sample Consent Letter
printed on Urban Assembly letterhead

Dear _____,

My name is Alexis Goldberg and I am a graduate student in Educational Leadership at Bank Street College of Education. I am also a full-time Achievement Coach at The Urban Assembly. I am currently conducting research for my Master's thesis and will be acting as the principal investigator for this study. The goal of my Master's thesis is to research how coordinators are best supported in implementing a performance based assessment at their school and if network level support can lead to school culture change.

I am interested in using our work together as the basis for this study, and recording the insights from our collaborative process to inform my future work at The Urban Assembly in supporting teachers and schools in implementing performance based assessment. The information that you provide will provide me with insights that will be used in my future work in my studies and at The Urban Assembly.

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to participate in an interview as well allow me to share feedback from our work together throughout the process. Specifically, I will be recording notes from our collaborative work as well as one to two interviews to discuss your role in the process. The time commitment will be our monthly CPAS meetings and the duration of the interviews. Please note that if the feedback that you share during this time is included in the thesis, then your name will be changed to protect your privacy. I will also change the name of the school to protect the privacy of the institution. If you need further clarity around the scope of the work I am happy to provide that to you as well.

Please also note that the Master's thesis will be placed in the stacks of the Bank Street library and will be available to all students and faculty; the document may also be circulated to others outside of the institution. The thesis will also be utilized at The Urban Assembly and may serve as a model program for other networks interested in establishing procedures around implementing performance based assessments in their schools.

Please sign on the lines below to indicate that you grant permission for the information that you provide to be used for the purpose of this study. Thank you for taking the time to share you insights with me. If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact me at agoldberg@urbanassembly.org

Sincerely,

Alexis Goldberg
Achievement Coach
The Urban Assembly

Please sign below to indicate your consent in the process:

_____ _____
Name Date

Independent Study Checklist

The Library cannot accept your independent study until you have read and checked off each of the items below:

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☑ There is one abstract after the title page of <u>each</u> copy of my independent study.

☑ All pages are numbered, including the pages of any appendices. If the thesis includes an unpaginated picture book or other unnumbered inserts, pagination accounts for these pages and resumes on the correct number.

☑ The table of contents includes page numbers.

☑ All of the pages are in the correct order and face right-side-up.

☐ I have included a copy of the documents(s) granting me permission to use any copyrighted material in the study. n/a

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☑ Persons in any photographs cannot be identified other than by a first name.

☑ The left margin is 1 ½ inches wide.

☑ I have placed a blank sheet of paper at the beginning and at the end of each copy.

☑ I understand that the Library's copy of this independent study will be bound exactly as I am submitting it, and that the Library is not responsible for any errors in organization or appearance.

Alex Agoldberg
Student's Name

12/19/11
Date