

learning and leading

empowering effective educators through teacher evaluation and focused instruction



A message from MPS, MFT and the Principals' Forum

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of Minneapolis Public Schools, the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers and the Minneapolis Principals' Forum, we wish you a relaxing and joyful winter break. As we wrap up the calendar year, it is important to us that we pause and take time to thank you for your tireless dedication to our students. You have done amazing things this fall that truly show that you are working together as educational leaders.

As you know, teacher evaluation has been a top priority for us this fall. For more than a year now, MPS has worked closely with teachers and principals to refine our system so it is meaningful for Minneapolis. We are constantly looking for ways to serve you better, which means listening carefully to suggestions about how we can improve the system.

Just as we did during the design process last year, we believe it is important to listen and respond to your feedback. When you told us the rubric could be more user-friendly, we convened a group of teachers and observers and made substantial revisions. When you told us that more teachers should be observers, we certified an additional 100 teachers and provided funding for schools to support peer observations. Most recently, you expressed concern about the time and energy required to learn – and faithfully implement – this new process, especially in light of other initiatives rolling out this year. **As a group, school district leadership met with principals, teachers and MFT to come up with a couple of solutions: we are eliminating the spring student surveys and one short, primary observation.**

This first year of district-wide implementation is a critical opportunity for teachers and principals to learn the new system, which is why we want to make sure that everyone has the time and energy to make the most of this valuable process. We understand there may be more adjustments needed in the future as we continue to work together to get it right.

We are conscious of the amount of work that is being asked of you right now so we are working to streamline requirements in other areas. In May 2012, a steering committee was formed to outline a collaborative process to address teacher workload based on the Time to Teach, Time to Learn Memorandum of Agreement. MPS, MFT and the Principals' Forum are dedicated to seeing a clear plan for functions and activities that will be taken off teachers' plates or made more efficient and continue to move forward with that priority. In the days ahead, sites will be asked to be a part of this process – your voice is essential.

Let us be clear: we are committed to this work. MPS, MFT and the Principals' Forum have a common goal to do what is best for students and teachers. We are confident that if we can do a better job supporting our teachers, teachers can better support students. We have an urgent need to implement strategies and tools to ensure that every child throughout the school district graduates career and college ready. Our collective partnership is needed in order to accomplish this.

You should be proud of the work you have done for the students in Minneapolis Public Schools. We cannot thank you enough. We look forward to continuing our productive work together in 2013.

Sincerely,

Bernadeia H. Johnson, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Lynn Nordgren
President, Minneapolis Federation of Teachers

Karon Cunningham
President, Minneapolis Principals' Forum

Pillsbury Community School Interview

Pillsbury Community School features a diverse student population and a highly engaged parent community. We interviewed Principal Laura Cavender and teacher Chris Ramsey to learn more.

1. What makes working at Pillsbury unique?

Laura Cavender: The global community is absolutely the unique piece of Pillsbury. We have students from all over the world who speak over a dozen different languages. Of our 650 students, 400 speak a language other than English as their first language. Seeing students walking, playing and learning together really is delightful. I think the parent involvement is excellent. We had so many parents for our Title I night, we had to make a plan for an additional parent event. They come for everything. Our staff is great and I think that we just offer many, many involvement opportunities. In addition to offerings like reading and math nights or fitness nights, we also offer the Pillsbury Skis program, a bike club and an archery program.

Chris Ramsey: Pillsbury is unique because we have kids from many different countries represented in one place and it's interesting and fun to watch them navigate the whole process of getting to know each other, respecting each other's values, learning about each other's cultures and learning about each other's languages. Pillsbury is also unique because of parent involvement. Parents are in our school all the time. Every morning, they drop their children off, often stopping to talk with teachers and staff in the hallways. Many parents pick their children up in the afternoon. They go on field trips. We love that they are very involved. We see over 150 parents every morning and the same at pick-up. You can tell they are comfortable in the building and they enjoy being here. I also think that all of our staff offer unique skills. Pillsbury is Pillsbury because you can walk into a classroom and there is something the teacher offers that is unique. For example, this morning I walked into Ms. Baker's kindergarten classroom and she was holding up cans of food while making a graph comparing how many different kinds of food the students had brought into school for their "classroom" food drive. That's unique! And then there's Mr. Trumper, who, with his students, has written a grant for bikes for our students. Then they can go on full-class bike riding field trips, get into the habit of exercise and, most importantly, learn how to ride a bike while also writing for a real audience and getting true feedback.



Pictured: Laura Cavender and Chris Ramsey

One of our ELL teachers, Mr. Trumper, wrote a grant to get more bikes for our students so that they can go on full-class field trips. He involved the students in writing the grant to let them have opportunities to learn about their community by writing to people and sharing why we deserve to have this for our school and our community.

2. What have you learned from the teachers at Pillsbury this year?

Chris: I get to go into a lot of classrooms and see a lot of different strategies that teachers use to build relationships in order to meet students' academic needs and engage them in what they are learning. As I am working with teachers on differentiation, I am also learning about differentiation from many teachers. Ms. Jernberg did a whole science unit on the moon and then took that and differentiated using student choice. How would you like to learn about the moon? They learned through music, through art, through poetry and folktales and then they wrote all about what they had learned. So, I learn when I get to see strong teachers give students the tools and then watch students really bring it to a level that is exceptional.

Laura: Here at Pillsbury, we continually learn from each other all day long. Our professional development is provided mostly by staff members. We highlight a staff member at the beginning of every professional development session. According to the rubric, we find exemplary people and we highlight them either by video or having them share something. We read "The Daily 5," which shares

five strategies to use every day within your reading block, for a PD. Groups presented a couple of chapters each. The fourth- and fifth-grade team used the "Gilligan's Island" theme song and put the words to the daily five. It was unbelievable! Do you think the staff remembers it? Absolutely.

One group did a play, and one group a rap. As a staff, we differentiated by teaching each other. Our Multilingual Department created a several-session academic language PD. We learn from each other all the time. Sometimes we are presenters, sometimes we are learners, but we all do it together.

3. What role does feedback play in the work at Pillsbury?

Chris: It plays a huge role in any system. We want to really look at feedback and what teachers say and take into consideration whether it is valid for change and works toward that change. So, for example, teachers wanted to do more differentiated PLCs, so last spring they were able to choose a topic for their PLCs. We had PLCs on brain research, Promethean technology and two different ones on beginning and advanced Words Their Way. We listen to and act on the kind of feedback that promotes learning.

Laura: Feedback is truly an important part of learning. We have a culture of learning within our building and feedback plays a big role in making changes. When I was teaching, I kept wondering when I was going to ever get there and be the best. I realized you never really do get there because you continue to learn and use the feedback from others to make changes and get even better at what we do. We are always looking at student, family and staff feedback to get better at what we do.

4. What have you done to make the observation model fit within the systems at Pillsbury?

Laura: I think the most important thing that we have done is that all of our professional development fits into the Standards of Effective Instruction. Our professional development was planned from the data and that professional development relates to the Standards of Effective Instruction. All of it is connected. We have big posters of the

Student Surveys Update

Pillsbury Interview, Continued.

Standards of Effective Instruction up in the media center during professional development and teachers are asked at the end to fill out a post-it note of what we did today and put it where it belongs in the Standards of Effective Instruction, really showing them that it is all connected and the purpose behind what we were doing.

Chris: We model what we want and highlight teachers who are exemplary. It is much easier to obtain exemplary when we can see it, feel it, hear it. We have a really good way of visioning at our school. Our vision is: all children ready to lead the future. They're not just ready for the future – they're ready to lead the future. So, we want to help teachers, parents and students to envision what exemplary teaching and learning looks like and then move toward that as we work together in co-teaching, planning and modeling for each other. The observation model is just good teaching and I think that we are always trying to be the best that we can be.

5. What is one of the best moments you've had with students this year?

Chris: I can think of a lot of "best" moments. One of our smart goals is to be sure the students in the top quartile are making their annual yearly progress along with all of our students. The change in focus is starting to change the culture of the school, moving toward a much more academic focus. Last week, I was in a first-grade classroom and we were talking about the relationship between bees and flowers because the week before we had the beekeeper from the Bell Museum come in and bring his bees. I said, "So, what is the relationship between bees and flowers?" This little first-grader raises his hand and says, "They have a symbiotic relationship," and I just smiled and said, "Do you know what that means?" He said, "Well, yeah, they have a relationship where they don't harm each other; they help each other." Out of a first grader! I was also talking with a parent who was telling me that she is teaching her first-grader the Egyptian curriculum along with what he is learning at school. That tells me that students, teachers and parents are working toward a much stronger focus on high academics, on learning and on really trying to prepare children.

Laura: I have many, many wonderful moments. Like I said before, the children are delightful. I meet the students in the entryway every morning and the smiles are just priceless. I see the children in the classroom, in the lunchroom, reading, playing games. Watching kindergarteners working in pairs, one of them coaching the other on reading, is just amazing to me. Students leading transitions in the classroom, student discussions about literature or science experiments, students at the student-of-the-month celebration – there are so many wonderful moments that we get to experience every day with our kids.

6. Do you have any observation tips that you would like to share?

Chris: I don't do observations, but I go into classrooms and co-teach lessons. In doing that, I build a strong relationship with teachers so that they are comfortable sharing and asking for help, materials or whatever I can provide to help them be successful in the classroom. They are extremely thankful, which is a huge feedback for me.

Laura: I would agree with Chris that the biggest observation strategy we can share is to build relationships with the staff, because it is really about learning and in order for learning to take place there must be trust and a solid relationship.

If you would like your site featured, please email Elise Maxwell (Elise.Maxwell@mpls.k12.mn.us).



During survey administration week, more than 30,000 MPS students were given the opportunity to share their perceptions of their classroom and school environments. The TRIPOD team is working hard to create your individual report, which will be shared with you in February. We realize that there were some survey administration challenges and we thank you for your patience and willingness to work through these challenges. We continue to collect great critical feedback that we will use in the coming weeks to improve future survey administrations. Some of the feedback that has been shared so far:

- The demographic questions could be more inclusive and should be reviewed.
- Schools appreciated district-provided proctors for K-1
- Some questions may have been worded in a confusing way
- The survey may have been too long, particularly for kindergarteners
- Students were excited to have the opportunity to provide their opinions

If you have not yet shared feedback, you will have additional opportunities after results are received, through both a formal survey and the spring road-show. We remain committed to improving both the survey administration experience and the usefulness of the measure, and your continued feedback is a critical. Thank you for all of your time and input.





Value-Added Update

Teacher-level value-added results will be distributed to eligible teachers in late January. The teacher evaluation team is currently working with the Teacher Evaluation Advisory Group (TEAG) to determine how to make these results more accessible and more meaningful for teachers. We are also assembling a small focus group of teachers who have volunteered to look at their own value-added reports in December and provide feedback on what MPS can do to support schools and teachers once the reports are distributed. If you have any questions about value-added reports and what you can expect, please contact Daniel Glass (Daniel.Glass@mpls.k12.mn.us).

Feedback and 2012-2013 Decision

Decision	Decision Process	Timeline
<p>Model Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observation Model • Value-Added Plan • Student Survey Plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • November - March: collect stakeholder feedback on the observation model, value-added pilot and student survey pilot through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Observation feedback survey in eCompass - Observer feedback survey - Student survey feedback survey that will be distributed in February (after the reports are distributed) - Value-added feedback survey that will be distributed in February (after the reports are distributed) - Administrator feedback survey - Spring roadshow • March - April: All feedback will be summarized into a report. This report will be reviewed and edited by the Think Tank and Advisory Group. • Formal decision-making retreat with delegates from the Think Tank, Advisory Group, MFT and Forum. 	<p>Decision will be made and communicated to all stakeholders in April.</p>
<p>Approach to measuring student learning for teachers in non-tested grades and subjects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • December: Academic Leadership Team will propose options for MPS' approach for non-tested grades and subjects. • February - March: Think Tank and Advisory Group will make a recommendation. • April: Superintendent will make a final decision. 	<p>Decision will be made and communicated to all stakeholders in April.</p>
<p>Observation summarization process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February: Teacher evaluation team will generate report options. • March: Think Tank and Advisory Group will make a decision on which option to pilot this year. 	<p>Decision will be made and communicated to all stakeholders in April.</p>

Focused Instruction



Preview the new Focused Instruction curriculum guides

As we complete the next phase of Focused Instruction curriculum guides, we invite teachers to preview the work produced thus far. We value teacher insight and want to make sure teachers have ample opportunity to respond to the proposed units and learning targets that will be introduced next year. Teachers can preview the drafts of Year-at-a-Glance maps, which include the unit sequence and long-term learning targets for each course, at the [Focused Instruction phase II preview page](#)¹.

Please note that the curriculum writing teams are currently developing supporting targets and compiling core materials that support the long-term targets. Teachers will have the chance to preview these in the spring. Teaching and Learning content specialists will review your responses as they continue to refine the curriculum guides. Thank you for taking the time to preview the drafts and offer your input. Please direct any questions you may have to Tina Platt at tina.platt@mpls.k12.mn.us.

Submit your enhancement requests for CFS now before it's too late

We are currently preparing to prioritize new enhancement requests for Classroom for Success, phase III. Phase II will be introduced on January 18 and phase III will be introduced in summer 2013. Since developing web software is a lengthy process, we are already looking at the most urgent requests for phase III now. If you have specific needs for CFS functionality, please identify them **before December 31**. After this date, no new suggestions will be accepted for phase III, which means it will be January 2014 before the next round of new updates. Requests can be entered in the "Help" tab of CFS under "Issues/Suggestions." Just select "Suggestions" and enter the feature you would like to see added to the system, along with a brief rationale. Then submit!

Professional Development Funding Opportunity

The Office of Instructional Leadership has received an external contribution to support professional development and enhanced learning opportunities. We are offering additional funding (up to \$5,000) to sites that would like to build on their current professional development opportunities and structures. Specifically, schools that are currently supporting teachers with the SOEI process can fill out a short [application](#)² for funding that will take these supports to the next level. Schools will need both a teacher and an administrative representative to apply for these funds.

Please contact Abbie Finger (Abbie.Finger@mpls.k12.mn.us) or Elise Maxwell (Elise.Maxwell@mpls.k12.mn.us) if you have questions. Below is a timeline for this funding opportunity.

- Friday, January 18: Applications due
- Friday, February 1: Funded sites announced
- Thursday, February 14: Funded sites featured in Learning and Leading
- Late March/Early April: Site visits to observe enhanced learning opportunities
- May: Administrator and teacher present new learning at the principals' meeting
- May: Sites featured in Learning and Leading

1. <http://bit.ly/curriculum-guides>
2. <http://bit.ly/soei-pd>

Haiku Contest & Shout Outs

Haiku Winner

Congratulations to Jill Nelson from Andersen United Community School for winning the November haiku contest. We will be providing doughnuts for your next staff meeting!

How do we measure
The ripple of a teacher
On the pond of life

- Jill Nelson, Andersen

December Haiku Contest

Learning and Leading is sponsoring round two of the teacher evaluation and/or Focused Instruction haiku contest. Please email your submission to Jennifer.Ennen@mpls.k12.mn.us with the subject line "Haiku." The winner of the haiku contest will receive doughnuts for the entire staff at his or her school. The top haiku will be featured in the next issue of Learning and Leading.

Shout Outs

- Great work Patti Hall, Paula Lynch and Stephanie Bales on creating the "Literacy Geeks" newsletter at Andersen.
- Thank you to our new TEAG member, Lisa Riley from Marcy Open.
- Thank you to all of the student survey site coordinators. Your leadership was invaluable during the survey administration week.
- Thank you to all of the teachers who submitted entries to the November haiku contest.

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1. How does dropping one short observation for all teachers impact the observation calendar?

Dropping a short observation does not impact the dates of the observation rounds (see below). For tracks 1-8, the primary observer will drop a short observation during round 2, 3, 4 or 5. For track 9, the secondary observer will drop the short observation in round 4.



Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4	Round 5*
Sept 4-Nov. 23 (12 weeks)	Nov. 26-Feb.1 (8 weeks)	Feb. 4-March 15 (6 weeks)	March 18-April 26 (5 weeks)	April 29-June 14 (7 weeks)

*Please note that all observations will need to be complete by May 31. All post-conferencing must be complete by June 7. All paperwork must be complete by June 14.

2. How can I provide feedback on the student survey?

At the end of January we will be sending out a feedback survey to all teachers. We are waiting to send this out until teachers receive their results. We want feedback on both the administration and the reports. If you would like to provide feedback prior to the survey, please email tequestions@mpls.k12.mn.us. Also, we will be visiting every school to listen to feedback between January and April during our spring roadshow.

3. What tests will be used for value-added reports?

Grade	Pre-test	Post-test
K	BKA - fall	BKA - spring
1	MPS 1 st -grade assessment - fall	MPS 1 st -grade assessment - spring
2	MAP test - fall	MAP test - spring
3	2 nd -grade spring MAP test	3 rd -grade MCA
4-8	Prior year MCA	Current year MCA