



Olmsted Falls City Schools

One high-performing district's build on excellence

While Olmsted Falls City Schools has achieved the highest accountability rating on the state report card since its inception, it chose to become involved in the Ohio Improvement Process (OIP) to recognize the excellence achieved and consider the next steps in order to build upon that excellence.

Dr. Jim Lloyd, assistant superintendent of the Olmsted Falls City Schools, has been part of a continuous improvement process in two high-performing districts for approximately 15 years. Dr. Lloyd believes that Olmsted Falls' current work through the OIP represents the first time he's had the opportunity to be engaged in a collaborative inquiry process through the use of a district leadership team (DLT). The OIP has allowed the DLT to practice true leadership, regardless of the participant's role, allowing teachers and administrators to have honest conversations about their problems and how to tackle them together.

Through participation in the OIP, the district transitioned from a strategic plan that had far too many goals to a single, coherent district plan with one goal—increased student achievement by 5% in reading, math, social studies and science.

Four action steps were identified to move the district towards the accomplishment of its goal:

- 1)** Provide professional development to increase teachers' capacity to make the learning targets clearer for students and provide them with collaborative opportunities to share practices;
- 2)** Provide professional development to increase teachers' capacity to provide high quality feedback to students and provide them with collaborative opportunities to share practices;
- 3)** Create a formative system to determine if the district is making progress in making the learning targets clearer for students; and
- 4)** Meet in data teams to determine if students are achieving and making adequate progress/growth.

The role and function of building leadership team (BLT) members in each school is to collaboratively determine how these actions are operationalized at the building level. Using the OIP, the district's newer approach is to have educators at the building level, within a defined autonomous structure, determine what commitments they are willing to make to one another to fully implement what they've learned and to monitor the impact on student learning.

The DLT sets the non-negotiable strategies of *making learning targets clearer for students and providing students with high quality feedback before, during and after learning* (this is the *defined* part). The DLT then empowers each BLT and grade-level team to collaboratively define how increased clarity and feedback will be achieved in their building (this is the *autonomous* part). Olmsted Falls believes that by diffusing leadership and decision making within a defined structure, the probability of implementing the district's values within each classroom increases dramatically.

District focus has increased through implementation of the OIP. Through collaborative inquiry, district and school personnel have made strides towards developing shared instructional practices and have made a commitment to one another to deeply implement these practices. This kind of engagement has positioned the district to be more intentional in aligning focused actions with desired results, increasing the likelihood of replicating success in each classroom and in each building. Most importantly, it has put those that matter most—teachers—in a positive, influential leadership role.

The Benefits of District Leadership Team and Building Leadership Team Membership

- Have a voice and be a part of the district or building's attempt at real and whole collaboration among all groups
- Visit classrooms in different buildings and/or across different grade levels and learn from teachers sharing effective practices

Assessment for Learning

"Quality assessment is indistinguishable from effective classroom instruction."

– Rick Stiggins, co-author of *Classroom Assessment for Student Learning: Doing It Right—Using It Well*

Olmsted Falls measures student learning through a balanced assessment approach that includes both formative and summative assessments. The district uses the data to determine what students are learning—not for accountability purposes, but for the purpose of informing instruction. They have found that data opens the door to collaboration and reflection on teaching practices.

Where am I going? (Alignment with district's CIP action step 1)

- 1) Provide a clear and understandable vision of the learning target.
- 2) Use examples and models of strong and weak work.

Where am I now? (Alignment with district's CIP action step 2)

- 3) Offer regular descriptive feedback.
- 4) Teach students to self-assess and set goals.

How can I close the gap?

- 5) Design lessons to focus on one aspect of quality at a time.
- 6) Teach students focused revision.
- 7) Engage students in self-reflection, and let them keep track of and share their learning.



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