

Developed by Paul Bloomberg and Barb Pitchford

# IMPACT TEAMS



**One  
District's Journey**

The Joplin Schools Story  
Impact Teams | Case Study



For More Information About Impact Teams Visit  
[www.LeadingImpactTeams.com](http://www.LeadingImpactTeams.com)

# About Impact Teams



**PAUL BLOOMBERG** is an experienced school improvement coach who has transformed districts through coaching, professional development and curriculum support.



**BARB PITCHFORD** is a dedicated and passionate educator with over 40 years of experience in K–12 teaching, counseling, and building leadership.

Impact Teams are teams of teachers and leaders who partner with students and with each other in learning.

The development and design of the Impact Team model is based on extensive research that identifies those practices that maximize student learning (Hattie, 2009). Impact Teams operationalize six influences that are proven to have the highest effect on student learning:

- Teacher-Student Relationships: .48 ES
- Meta-Cognitive Strategies: .55 ES
- Feedback: .66 ES
- Teacher Clarity: .75 ES
- Deliberate Practice: .79 ES
- Classroom Discussion: .82 ES
- Micro-Teaching: .88 ES
- Assessment Capable Learners: 1.33 ES
- Collective Efficacy: 1.39 ES

The Impact Team Model uses a simple but powerful 3-step protocol. The protocol is universal and can be used in the classroom and in teacher and leadership team meetings at all levels.

## 2: ANALYSIS



## 1: EVIDENCE

## 3: ACTION...

# About Impact Teams

## Step 1: EVIDENCE

CLASSROOM	IMPACT TEAM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students are using and identifying success criteria in exemplars and models of proficient work</li><li>• Students are identifying success criteria in their own work and in each other's work</li><li>• Students are applying the success criteria in authentic and relevant work aligned to the standard</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evidence is based on the success criteria (holistic rubric, analytical rubric, check-list)</li><li>• Evidence is desegregated by performance level (Advanced, Proficient, Progressing, Novice)</li><li>• Evidence is prepared for analysis prior to the Impact Team Meeting</li></ul>

## Step 2: ANALYSIS

CLASSROOM	IMPACT TEAM
<p>Prior to Impact Team Meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students self / peer assess to determine where they are at in the learning</li><li>• Students engage in reflective dialogue with teacher to determine root cause or why</li><li>• Students determine strengths in relationship to the success criteria</li><li>• Students determine next steps in relationship to the success criteria</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Team engages in collaborative analysis by performance level</li><li>• Team uses all evidence (self &amp; peer assessment, classroom discussion, student work) to determine strengths and needs of for each group of students</li><li>• Team prioritizes a need /next step for each student group</li></ul>

## Step 3: ACTION

CLASSROOM	IMPACT TEAM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Students create learning goals based on self, peer assessments and feedback</li><li>• Students co-create a plan for increasing learning</li><li>• Students revise their work based on reciprocal feedback</li><li>• Students monitor their learning goals</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Team creates an action plan for "just right" instruction for each student group utilizing high impact strategies</li><li>• Team creates an ambitious goal for increasing learning across all student performance groups</li><li>• Team implements plan and re-assesses</li><li>• Team reflects on plan to determine impact</li></ul>

# CASE STUDY | Joplin Schools

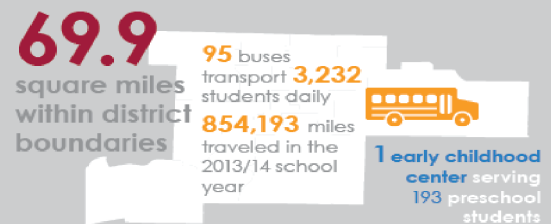
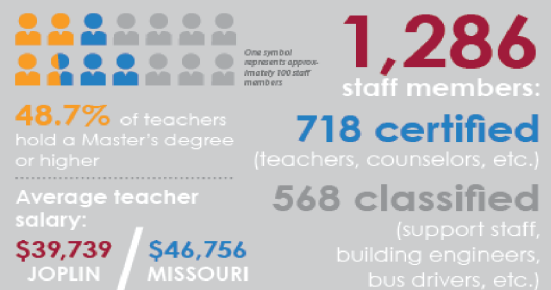
## The Context: About the District

Joplin is an urban/suburban community that spans 70 miles and is located in the southwest corner of Missouri. The Joplin School district serves around 7,600 students PK–12. There are 11 elementary schools, 3 middle schools, one high school and trade school, and one early childhood center. Of the 1286 employees, 718 are certified staff; 49% of the certified staff hold a master's degree or higher.

## Demographics

- Number of teachers 718
- Number of students 7600
- Percentage of students on free/reduced lunch 61%
- Percentage of limited English proficient students 3%
- Percentage of special ed students: 15%
- Any other relevant data: Average teacher experience is 10 years

## JOPLIN SCHOOLS AT A GLANCE



Joplin Schools' data is collected from the 2013/14 school year. www.joplinschools.org



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## The Challenge

In 2011, the city of Joplin was hit with an F5 tornado that was close to 1 mile wide and was on the ground for 13 miles, destroying 6 schools, hundreds of homes and businesses, and resulted in 161 lives being lost. It was the deadliest tornado in the USA since 1947 and resulted in being the most costly tornado recorded in U.S. history. As a result, people and businesses from all over the world generously responded to aide in the recovery of the community and in the Joplin Schools system. As the district began to rebuild, the Board of Education, administration, and the community committed to think in innovative ways and not just rebuild what had previously been. A team of district administrators, community members, parents, educators, and students decided to design schools to be collaborative, to have flexible spaces, and to engage students in learning anytime, anywhere. Innovation did not stop with just the bricks and mortar. For example, Instead of textbooks, the decision was made to go 1:1 with Macbooks at the high school and focus on using open-ed resources to empower all learners to engage in college and career readiness and foster a passion for learning to become responsible and innovative citizens.

Along with the new spaces came a slue of new initiatives to help support the new environments and new thinking. The high school focused on project-based learning, authentic performance assessments, and becoming a career path high school. Middle Schools were engaged in work around team planning, cross-curricular units of study, and increasing the rigor through the use of formative assessment. Elementary schools were heavily involved in curriculum work, using data-informed instruction, and designing tiered interventions to improve literacy. Needless to say, the district was hit with initiative fatigue and suffering from a lack of district-wide focus.

“Impact Teams has helped teachers, myself, and the principal look at data differently. We ask each other now, “So how did this impact students” or “What did the students that mastered it get that the others didn’t?” We started to take a deeper look at the data, teachers then took it back to their instruction to revise or differentiate. It has become a process that we use that is continuous and ongoing. As a coach, I think Impact Teams helped me my first year get into conversations and then into classrooms. It opened up barriers for me to

ask teachers how I could help or what we could do together to help the kids. It has become one of my favorite days where I get to meet with all of the teachers in a day and see the gains students are making and how we can work together to improve the data even more.”

—Hope Strasser, Teaching and Learning Coach

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The challenge came full force with the implementation of the new Common Core State Standards and the drive to prepare students for the variety of new programs being designed at the High School. Teachers realized that they had become dependent on textbooks or programs. Totally absent was an aligned, engaging curriculum that was standards-based. In addition, high-quality, standards-based formative assessments to measure student progress were not evident in most classrooms. The Instructional Services team reached out to Dr. Paul Bloomberg to begin work on curricular alignment and to create a model to monitor and measure student progress. The desire was to create a plan that would shift conversations away from just “the teaching,” and balance the conversation towards “teaching and student learning.” It was a team effort — the central office leadership team, principals, instructional coaches and Dr. Bloomberg co-constructed a 3-year professional learning plan with an emphasis on developing self-regulated learners. Since the core of Impact Team is maximizing the formative assessment process, the goal became to implement the formative assessment process in all classrooms. The following objectives emerged:

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- **Objective 1: Clarity**

Develop a coherent curriculum in English Language Arts. We wanted it to build over time and transfer to other disciplines. The curriculum would create a context for learning so that teachers would set students up for success with authentic, relevant learning experiences. This curriculum was desperately needed and we wanted a curriculum that would provide clarity for teacher teams and ultimately clarity for students.

- **Objective 2: Transferability**

We wanted to ensure transferability of skills across content areas. It was important that when we engaged students in self and peer assessment, reflection and goal setting that students were setting goals regarding standards that would prepare them for success in college, career and civic life.

- **Objective 3: Equity**

Ensure all students receive standards-based curriculum. Using the ELA/Literacy learning progressions was integral to our work regarding equity. We wanted our curriculum to suggest an intentional mapping as to how to teach upon earlier concepts to get deeper understanding. Since our students were at different levels, we wanted to make sure that there were multiple entry points into the curriculum. We also wanted to ensure that students were able to take ownership of their learning. The curriculum had to provide a guide for implementing the formative assessment process.

*“I’ve been working for 17 years in special education and special programs, and in doing so I know what it’s like to be a segmented part of the educational process. Working with The Core Collaborative with a focus on the Impact Team Model has finally given our district a central focus. The work done by The Core Collaborative consultants has had a profound effect on all aspects of our district. For the first time in 17 years, I see all departments speaking a common language, from our special education programs, our English Language Learner programs, even our juvenile detention programs, everyone is speaking the same language. Positive things are happening in the way teachers are approaching their instruction, pedagogy is changing, and more best practice instructional strategies are being utilized. It used to be the only place you could get high quality instruction was in the general education setting, with implementation of The Impact Team Model, standards based instruction is taking place in the hallways, in the special education department, it’s happening all over our district and it’s something I’ve never seen before. Teacher team, school teams and teacher teams all working together towards a common goal is what anchor’s this work.”*

—Mark Barlass, Executive Director  
of Student Services and Special  
Education Administrator

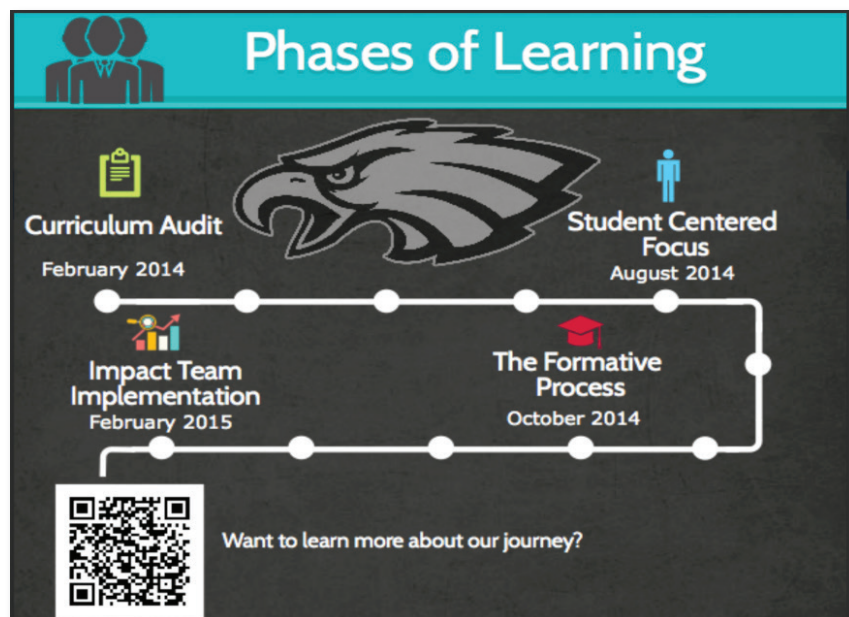
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## Implementation

In order to place students at the center for learning, we knew that we needed a scalable plan that could start in English Language Arts, and that could also be replicated for other content areas in the future. It was important to emphasize that this was not a program, but a process. As our focus on student-centered learning took shape, we focused on working with Impact Teams in three key areas:

- Instructional Leadership
- Teacher Clarity
- Student Voice

Cohorts of principals, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders developed a phased implementation plan that allowed for differentiation based on the professional learning needs at different sites while maintaining the core for Impact Teams. Implementing the formative assessment process in all classrooms would shift the environment to be ensure self-regulated learning.



“Our leadership and administrative team have gained a much deeper understanding of teacher clarity and the formative process through leadership training on classroom walkthroughs and specific feedback to students. With a strong focus on teacher clarity, self-regulated learning and specific feedback in communication arts from Dr. Bloomberg, we saw large percentile gains in our proficient and advanced students on state testing. Impact Teams were developed at one of our elementary schools and we saw gains in this already high performing school. We are looking forward to taking Impact Teams and the formative process to our other schools. Paul’s support was instrumental in this process and the success we have seen thus far. We look forward to the student achievement results in the future.”

—Jennifer Doshier,  
Executive Director of  
Elementary Education



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Over the course of twenty days throughout the school year, the cohort engaged with Dr. Bloomberg in Phase One of the plan, laying the foundation for the Impact Team Model by:

- Utilizing the “Unpacking for Success” protocol to understand and strengthen teachers’ understanding of State and National standards. This six-step protocol led to a collective understanding of the concepts and skills required for standards mastery, cognitive rigor, and using the building blocks of the learning progression for differentiation.
- Building a coherent curriculum with vertical alignment of ELA standards, including collaboratively creating standards-based rubrics that identified core competencies of each grade level.
- Using the Evidence-Analysis-Action classroom protocol as a guide to implement the formative assessment process in classroom instruction.
- Using formative assessment evidence to refocus the PLCs on student learning using the 3-step protocol “Evidence-Analysis-Action.”
- Designing a Model Teams approach at each school to leverage the existing expertise to effectively implement the Impact Team protocols and become a model for other teams.

In addition to face-to-face work sessions, Dr. Bloomberg spent 10 days visiting key sites and implemented the protocol “evidence walks” with central office administration, site principals, instructional coaches, and teacher leaders to coach leaders and teams to coach for clarity around the curriculum work.

Finally, if the focus was on students and their learning, we needed to capture their voice. The difference between Impact Teams and other PLC’s is that the protocol runs parallel to the classroom. The same conversations adults are having with each other can then be taken back to the classroom for a conference with students. When students get and give feedback around their goals, they gain confidence and clarity as well.

“We partnered with The Core Collaborative two years ago. While working with them we changed the format of our “data teams” to become more relevant and to have more of an “impact” on our student learning. These teams became our “impact teams.” Through this process we were able to dig down, analyze the student data and to collaborate around strategies to impact student learning. We know much more about our students, why they are struggling, and what we can do to help them. We are able to collaborate, find specific strategies, and apply them. We have seen tremendous growth with this collaboration and are now involving students in the feedback process to continue to improve student learning. The feedback process is now reciprocal between the teachers and the students. The students have learned to goal set based off of the data they are receiving. The teachers are excited to see the growth in students and the students are excited to see the growth in themselves.”

—Julie Munn, Principal

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## Lessons Learned

As with any initiative, communication is key. The on-going challenge became effectively communicating the progress of our work and how to provide evidence that the investment was paying off for student learning to all stakeholders. The strategy that gained the most momentum was shift perspectives by communicating celebrations, sharing models of success, and providing updates through continuous progress monitoring.

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*“The Impact Team in First Grade is implemented to increase student reading and fluency levels plus comprehension in a variety of reading texts. First grade teachers meet as a team weekly with data obtained on each student during guided reading group work. The students are assigned to groups based on weekly data, and teaching strategies are set for the upcoming week of instruction. Teaching becomes a true team effort with other resources such as Early Literacy teachers, peer tutors, paraprofessionals, and parent volunteers pushed in during the guided reading time.*

*Students are given a chance to set their individual goals, provided with strategies to achieve goal, and given their data to review. As a teacher, I am witness to an amazing transformation in education. Students know where they are in their learning, where they need to go, and strategies on how to achieve their individual goal. The most exciting part is the face of a student when a goal is reached and celebrated with a big smile! I am confident when I say that Impact Teams are responsible for the increase in the number of students meeting and exceeding reading comprehension levels in first grade.”*

*—Karen Evans, 1st Grade Teacher*

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A second challenge was providing adequate on-going support for these innovations. The solution was found when we narrowed the support to those teams that were willing and stable. These model teams would then become support for new teams as we built capacity.

*“The work we have done with our impact team has changed the way I teach. My teaching partner and I meet regularly to norm our formative assessments as well as our summative data. We discuss not only where our students are in their learning progression and how well they understand a concept, but rather WHY they are where they are. We ask questions that help us discover why our students who have mastered a concept were able to master it, and ask what knowledge they have that others lack. Completing this step of our impact team meetings has had the greatest impact on my teaching. Before impact teams, it never occurred to me to figure out the “root cause” of student success. In the past, I had only looked at information and skills students lacked.*

*Together my teaching partner and I develop strategies that we implement immediately. If she sees growth in her students that I don’t see in my own, we look deeper into how each of us taught our lessons and share what worked well along with what was less effective. We are able to give each other ideas to try in our classrooms. We have seen positive gains in our students’ learning as well as our own.”*

—Brandi Landis, 3rd Grade Teacher

A third lesson learned was to provide constant and consistent support to principals to enhance instructional leadership. Principals often get caught in operational whirlwinds that distract them from becoming effective instructional leaders. Keeping the Impact Team cycles going with principals allowed for central office to remove barriers, become more efficient in allocating resources, and provide better support to the sites.

The final lesson learned was to continuously give and get feedback from those closest to the work, the teachers and students. As the organization became more student-centered, the lens through which to make decisions became very focused, allowing for initiatives, programs, and positions not aligned to the mission to be eliminated.

*“It was amazing to me how profound the work that was done in Impact Teams changed my students’ achievement. When our team really dug into the formative assessments and started asking about root causes of misconceptions, it transformed the instruction that took place in our classrooms. By pinpointing what students still needed to know, we were able to use our time so much more effectively!”*

—Jennifer Sherrod, 3rd Grade, Kelsey Norman Elementary

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## KEY OUTCOMES

### District Total MSIP5 Percentage Results (Total for all 5 areas)

2013	2014	2015
78.6%	85%	86.8%

### District Overall Academic Percentage Results (Totals based on ELA, MATH, SCIENCE)

2013	2014	2015
69.6%	75.9%	85.7%

### District ELA Academic Percentage Results (Totals based on Proficient/Advanced+ Growth)

2013	2014	2015
56.3%	93.8%	100%

### Kelsey Norman Total Percentage Results (Academics Achievement, Sub Group Achievement, and Attendance)

2013	2014	2015
88.6%	87.1%	100%

### Kelsey Norman Overall Academic Percentage Results

2013	2014	2015
85%	85%	100%

### Kelsey Norman ELA Proficiency Results (Students scoring proficient and advanced)

2013	2014	2015
54.1%	61.7%	78.2%

**D**r. Norm Ridder, superintendent of the Joplin School District explaining district progress on state assessment results using the Impact Team Model.

*Joplin showed improvement for the third consecutive year, earning 86.8 percent of the total possible points in 2015, as compared with 78.6 percent of total points in 2013 on the state's school improvement formula. (The percentage of points earned is based on five key areas: academic achievement, subgroup academic achievement, college and career readiness, attendance, and graduation rate.)*

*"We can rest assured that we are seeing improvement, and now it's just strengthening that, and it's going to be exciting to see where we go from here," interim Superintendent Norm Ridder said.*

*Much of that improvement was because of a boost in Joplin's academic achievement scores, Ridder said. The district earned 48 out of 56 total possible points in that category in 2015, up from 42.5 points in 2014 and 39 points in 2013.*

*Ridder said an initiative (around self regulated learning) implemented during the 2014–15 academic year, before his arrival as interim superintendent, has helped bolster the district's academics. The initiative requires that students take ownership of their learning, that teachers collaborate with others in their grade level and that educators engage in a constant loop of feedback with their pupils.*

*He also said teachers have ramped up their reading and guided reading programs and has strengthened the relationship between their writing and reading programs for students.*

*"Teachers are doing a great job," he said. "It's the collaboration and raising the bar as far as expectations."*

—Dr. Norm Ridder, Interim Superintendent  
Dr. Ridder's Quote from the Joplin Globe Article



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## Next Steps

In 2015, the Joplin School district being guided by a new superintendent, Dr. Norm Ridder, went through a human-centered design plan to gather stakeholder voice and create a five-year strategic plan complete with a new mission and vision. With the help of community members, administration, teachers, parents, and students the vision of Joplin Schools is to engage a community of learners through integrity, empowerment, and opportunity.

The plan has three main goals:

**Goal 1: Joplin Schools will prepare every learner to be physically, socially, and intellectually ready to take on the challenges in the next level of learning.**

**Goal 2: Joplin Schools will be a team of empowered adults who are student-focused through their actions, resources, and continuous improvement cycles.**

**Goal 3: Joplin Schools will be a customer-focused culture that demonstrates responsible management in a purposeful manner to add value to the system for the benefit of students, staff, and patrons of the district.**

In order to achieve these goals, Joplin Schools will build a high performing community of learners engaged in their future through a culture of continuous improvement. The next step is to continue to build capacity within the system by developing models of success and providing feedback through the Impact Team process.

Taking the classroom model approach, a repeatable seven-week plan to support schools has been created in continuing to roll out student-centered learning one team at a time.



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