

IMPACT TEAMS



**One
District's Journey**

The Story of Reeds
Spring School District
Case Study

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

Step 2: ANALYSIS

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

Step 3: ACTION

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

CASE STUDY: REEDS SPRING SCHOOL DISTRICT

The Context: About the District

Reeds Spring School District is a small rural district located in southwest Missouri that serves five separate communities: Reeds Spring, Cape Fair, Branson West, Indian Point, and Kimberling City. It is near the tourism destination of Branson, thus there is a level of transiency present with approximately 40% of students in each grade level cohort moving over time. The District's free/reduced lunch population is 62% district-wide. The district is composed of five schools: one High School (grades 9–12), one Middle School (grades 7 and 8), one Intermediate School (grades 5 and 6), one Elementary School (grades 2 - 4), one Primary School (grades Pre–K, K–1), and a career education center that serves area school districts as well as Reeds Spring students. The teaching population is composed of primarily white, middle class teachers.

Demographics

- Number of teachers: 160
- Number of students: 1,730
- Percentage of students on free/reduced lunch: 61.8
- Percentage of white students: 93
- Percentage of limited education students: 11

The Challenge

Reeds Spring School District had been implementing Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) for 10 years; however, the effective use of data to respond to student learning needs was not occurring district-wide. Although there were pockets of competent teams, overall the district was not seeing the impact they wanted or needed. The teams were heavily focused on the teaching (planning) and not student learning. The conversations were around looking at summative data (autopsies) and not analyzing formative evidence of student learning (health checks). Some principals added a data analysis piece to the PLC form but even then the conversations were more on what teachers were doing and not on what students were learning.

The district has been quite methodical over the past decade with introducing initiatives in order to provide the needed support and professional learning to ensure proper implementation. A few of the initiatives introduced over the past several years to improve teaching and learning include a 1:1 digital conversion, Marzano's standards-based teaching and learning, implementation of rigorous curriculum such as Eureka Math in pre-K through Algebra I at the high school, as well as Expeditionary Learning Kindergarten through 8th grade.

Student achievement scores have generally fluctuated across the grade levels, and the free and reduced lunch population, as well as the students with special needs, have not progressed as expected. From the perspective of the Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Chris Templeton, Reeds Spring educators needed to learn how to collaborate productively to move teams to strategic action to address diverse learning needs.

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The “middle” was being served, but any learning needs outside of that were not being addressed effectively across the district. To better meet the needs of the more diverse learning groups, Dr. Templeton believed the district needed a systematic process that was timely and responsive to address the multiple learning needs for both the struggling learners as well as the higher achieving students.

In the spring of 2015, a nearby district, Joplin, offered a training on how teams use the formative assessment process to improve learning. Dr. Templeton attended the workshop and immediately realized that what she was learning was the missing piece for the Reeds Spring teams. *“It struck me that this was a simple straightforward process that teams could use to look at current evidence of student learning and take immediate action to move all students forward.”*

This process, called *Impact Teams*, provided the needed protocols for teams to look at data and other relevant evidence in a deep and meaningful way and most importantly, to follow up strategically in the classroom. At the workshop presented by Paul Bloomberg and Barb Pitchford, Dr. Templeton connected with Paul and Barb to develop a plan for professional learning around the Impact Team process for the Reeds Spring School District.

Desired Outcomes

Dr. Templeton identified two complementary sets of goals.

- **Short-term: to refocus the traditional PLC’s teaming process on analyzing quality evidence of student progress and to train teams on more effective collaborative practices**
- **Long-term: to create a robust learning culture district-wide by:**
 - Developing a collaborative culture in which teachers and leaders share and build knowledge and skills together
 - Developing student and teacher partnerships in learning in all classrooms – visibly and actively sharing the learning intentions (targets), success criteria, and pathways for learning
 - Creating a safe environment for feedback
 - Making quality feedback ubiquitous and from multiple sources (self, peer, teacher)
 - Planning for ways to strengthen student, teacher, and collective efficacy district-wide

Dr. Templeton noted that as soon as she shared the information from Joplin with the team of administrators in the spring of 2015 they were all on board with the Impact Team process, invested in revitalizing their school teams.

After the initial training with Barb Pitchford in May 2015, the building teams were ready to begin utilizing a focused protocol to guide their work. Dr. Templeton states,

“Watching the increasingly deep and clear understanding of the standards as a result of the Impact Team process has been eye-opening for everyone. We thought we held common understandings of the standards but we learned we sometimes had very different interpretations of the learning expectations! The focus this process brings is unparalleled. We are seeing immediate gains in student learning as teachers and students are now clear about learning intentions and success criteria. Additionally, the

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Implementation

Chronology - road map of professional learning

- **March 2015:** Dr. Templeton visited nearby district (Joplin)
- **April 2015:** Took teams (two teams, each with six educators and Dr. Templeton) to visit Joplin to observe the Impact Team process
- **May 2015:** First District training on Impact Teams with selected teams from the five schools facilitated by Barb Pitchford. Focus: Introduction to the Impact Team process, including the team protocols and the student-centered classroom assessment process
- **Summer 2015:** Dr. Templeton and Barb Pitchford developed a plan for the *Model Teams Approach* identifying RSSD's needs, desired outcomes, and available resources
- **2015/2016 School Year:** Implemented the *Model Teams Approach*: Focus on using the gradual release of responsibility process to develop teacher and building leaders' proficiency in facilitating the Impact Team process. One interested (willing) team per school, the instructional coach, and the principal participate in the three coaching sessions for the year.

Note: "pilot teams": first grade, third grade, sixth grade ELA, MS Science, HS ELA

- **October 2015:** Two areas of focus – 1) the EAA protocol, (3-step process that is used in the Impact Team meeting and in the classroom for student-centered assessment), and 2) the Unpacking protocol, teaching and practicing how to develop learning intentions and success criteria for teachers and students to use for self-and peer assessment
- **January 2016:** Coaching / Modeling the Impact Team meeting process (EAA protocol) using the evidence from the formative assessment process. Emphasis on engaging students in using feedback from self-and peer assessment.
- **April 2016:** Peer Facilitator/instructional coach and/or principal and Barb differentiate by building on next learning steps:
- **Evidence walks (protocol)** – looking for evidence of teacher clarity and self-and peer assessment
- **Principal and/or instructional coach uses the 3-step EAA protocol** to analyze student work
- **Teams continue to work on teacher clarity** – use the Unpacking protocol to develop success criteria for upcoming units of study

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Key Outcomes

Reflecting on the changes of the past year and the changing practices, Dr. Templeton identified the following key outcomes:

1. Leadership is critical to the change process: It became evident that the active role of the principal promoting and participating with the model team was key to effective implementation. The buildings in which the principal actively engaged in the learning process with the teams, in which she encouraged other teachers and teams to observe, inquire, and 'try out' the process, were the schools where the Impact Team process took hold. These were the schools where student engagement in self and peer assessment became increasingly prevalent.
2. Classroom clarity is the foundation: Discovering that teacher clarity is the essential first step to effective learning teams was an 'ah-ha!' for the principals and the teams. Taking time to deeply understand and agree on the expectations of the standards was the foundation that allowed the teams to develop crystal clear clarity for themselves and their students, to build effective assessment tasks, and build a feedback culture in their classrooms.
3. Developing collaborative cultures: The Model Teams Approach provided models for other teams in how to effectively collaborate around developing assessment capable learners and how to have an efficient focused meeting that resulted in high-impact actions. With this two-prong focus, teachers strengthened their individual and collective knowledge and skills in areas such as peer feedback, developing and using success criteria, self-assessment, collaborative inquiry using strategic protocols, and understanding what quality evidence is. They learned to enjoy the challenges of learning together.
4. It works! Once teams began the process of building clarity, focusing on developing assessment capable learners—peer and self-assessment, other teachers and teams became interested and inquiring about the process.

“I can remember when we first started the Impact Team training. At that point I was just hoping for something to help make our grade level meetings more effective and something to help put the focus on data-driven instruction. This process has provided so much more. Putting the focus on student learning, targeting instruction to improve results, creating success criteria, and increasing the amounts of student self-assessment has been extremely beneficial and resulted in increased student achievement as well as teacher clarity around grade level standards and learning processes.”

—Laura Weber, Intermediate School principal

“Being part of the Impact Team process influenced my team of teachers and me greatly. It became very clear to us the importance of developing teacher clarity around our priority standards and proficiency scales. We soon discovered that we would need to have tough conversations around these standards and become consistent with our expectations before we could even begin to give the students the necessary feedback to become successful learners. It has changed the way we do business at Reeds Spring Intermediate and has given us the vision for the next steps that have to be implemented to truly make a make a difference for our students.”

—Jodi Gronvold, Intermediate School principal



For More Information About Impact Teams Visit:
www.LeadingImpactTeams.com

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Changes and positive outcomes

- Teams focus on specific learning behaviors and actions not just what they plan to teach or what they taught
- Increased teacher clarity and agreement of learning goals and expectations based on the focus standards. The result is a greater depth of learning for both teachers and students
- Co-constructing success criteria with students resulted in students understanding where they are going (learning goals), where they are in the process of learning (formative assessment and feedback), and what the next steps are in their learning. *"A very positive outcome. Kids are clearer and know what they need to do to move to the next level."* Sixth-grade Math team
- *"Even struggling kids feel successful. They feel more empowered."* Sixth-grade ELA team
- *"We are already seeing gains in moving learners more quickly to the next level of learning in relation to their SMART goals."* Third-grade team

"Learning to build success criteria for a performance skill in my English Language Arts classroom has been the most meaningful and useful classroom tool I've come across in a long time. I feel more in control with the success criteria in hand. The Impact Team meeting can flow easily because we can clearly discuss breakdowns in a group of students' processes and get right to the brainstorming of possible solutions and lesson ideas to keep the students moving along in a positive trajectory."

—Normagene Reid, 6th Grade ELA teacher

Lessons Learned

- The more engaged the administrators are, the deeper and more effective the implementation. We need to create multiple and on-going opportunities for principals to learn and lead the work
- Before we begin the meeting process, we need to audit the teams' assessments to see where they are in the foundational standards work of unpacking to develop learning intentions and success criteria. Based on what we see as a result of the 'audit', we need to work with the team to ensure their evidence (student work) is aligned to the standard. If they don't have rubric-bound assessments aligned to the standard, we need to work with the coaches to do that work first.

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Next Steps

1. Expand the Impact Team process to other teams (grade levels and departments). Use the Model Teams that have been trained at each school to move the practice to other interested teams. Work with the principals to determine which teams, when, and how (consider the Adopt-a-Team approach)
2. Deepen the process at the secondary level. Focus on supporting the English Dept. at the High School and the Science team at the Middle School to become proficient at the process
3. Increase the number of peer facilitators
4. Introduce the other protocols (5) to the Model Teams
5. We need to move the teams to more robust transferable goals/standards that all teams can focus on (e.g., informative writing, claims/evidence/reasoning, theme/main idea, etc.)

Summary:

There has been significant growth in student achievement in the specific areas of focus for three of the Model Impact Teams (see above). They attribute the growth to:

- Much improved teacher agreement and clarity based on the focus standards, which leads to clarity of success criteria for the students.
- Teachers attribute the growth to the team focus on the 3-step protocol, Evidence~Analysis~Action.
- Learning how to professionally collaborate, to learn from and with each other using specific protocols
- Focusing on learning the formative process in the classroom – self-and peer assessment, goal setting, using feedback not to evaluate but to learn!



The Core Collaborative

“Impact Teams have broadened the focus to teacher action on a much deeper level. These meetings have created real dialogue about what we are doing and not doing as teachers. We have been able to develop better proficiency scales, success criteria, and a deeper understanding of how teacher clarity plays a huge role in helping students understand how they are progressing as learners and become successful.”

—Tonya Baker,
Intermediate School
instruction coach



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