Indicator Explanation

DOMAIN	EFFECTIVE PRACTICE	INDICATOR
Instruction	Diagnose and respond to student learning needs	3A.2 Instructional teams meet regularly to review student data from screening, progress monitoring, and outcome assessment to identify next steps for instruction.

Explanation. Relying on data from last year's assessment test or even a more recent periodic assessment does not enable teachers to make the timely adjustments in instruction and support that students require. Instructional Teams have access to formative assessments, including the teachers' ongoing tracking of student mastery. Instructional Teams can respond quickly when a student is having difficulty or is exhibiting early mastery and will benefit from enhanced assignments.

Questions: In planning instruction, do your Instructional Teams review student learning data, including close at-hand classroom assessments, to identify students in need of instructional support or enhancement? What data are analyzed? What supports and enhancements are available?

Schools have invested heavily in curriculum alignment, mapping their curricula to standards, benchmarks, and specific items of standards-based assessment. The resulting alignment is a set of data, a body of information carefully organized, that helps answer the question "What do we expect a student to know?" The challenge that lies ahead for most schools is to draw further connections between the aligned curriculum, the taught curriculum, the most efficacious instructional strategies, and the mastery evidenced by the individual student. This must be done in a way that assures that all students achieve the expected level of mastery while allowing each student ample opportunity to soar beyond that minimum expectation. The linkage from curriculum to instruction is tenuous in many schools, and insufficient systems are in place for capturing information about what is taught, how it is taught, and how it might best be learned by an individual student.

The research literature provides a wealth of information on instructional practices, but the usefulness of this information cannot be assumed from its abundance. Matching particular practices to the subject area, grade level, and students' prior learning can be a massive undertaking, leaving too much unproductive chaff in the bushel of productive grain. In the end, the teacher must hit the target where content, instructional mode, and learner requisites optimally meet. Monitoring the application of targeted learning strategies by teachers can help a school refine its professional development processes and improve its teachers' effectiveness. Some decisions are best made by the teachers responsible for particular groups of students—grade level teams or subject area teams, which we will call "instructional teams." Instructional Teams are manageable groupings of teachers by grade level or subject area who meet to develop instructional strategies aligned to the standards-based curriculum and to monitor the progress of the students in the grade levels or subject area for which the team is responsible. Instructional Teams need time for two purposes: (1) meetings, and (2) curricular and instructional planning. A 45-minute meeting twice a month is ideal for maintaining com-

munication and organizing the work at hand, operating with agendas, minutes, and focus. In addition, a block of 4 to 6 hours of time once a month is necessary for curricular and instructional planning, and additional whole days before and after the school year are a great advantage.

The pre-test is used as a quick assessment, a way for the teacher to assess each student's readiness for an objective. Likewise, the post-test is a way to get a quick read on students' mastery after completion of the unit or after completion of the period of instruction allotted for the objective. The pre-test and the post-test are the same—a before and an after, or parallel items of the same level of difficulty. In other words, the post-test isn't "harder" than the pre-test. The "items" need not be pencil and paper test items. The teacher may give the pre-test for a unit all at one time or in chunks, prior to addressing each new set of objectives. If the items are taken from a chapter test or other material, the Instructional Team indicates the specific items that correspond with the objective. The chapter test may include more items than the pre-test/posttest, of course. Pre-tests should not be graded. Post-tests may be graded, or included as part of larger graded tests. Between the pre-test and the post-test, students complete a variety of learning activities, including independent work and homework. They may also take other graded tests. The post-test then becomes the measure of how well the instruction was able to close the gap between what the student knew prior to the lesson and where the teacher wanted the student to be at the end of instruction. The post-test should use the same questions as the pre-test, and feedback from the post-test should be given to the student as quickly as possible. Instructional teams can use the results of the post-test to shape how they re-teach the lesson for those who did not understand the first time around, or if this is a large number of students, perhaps reexamine how the unit or the lesson was presented overall. If many students did poorly, it may require a "back to the drawing board approach." Teachers have several ways to determine mastery through the instructional process. The pre-test and post-test address only target objectives. The teacher assesses for mastery of prerequisite and enhanced objectives through learning activities (Redding, 2006).

References

Buffum, A., Mattos, M., & Weber, C. (2009). *Pyramid response to intervention*. Solution Tree Press.
Redding, S. (2006). *The mega system: Deciding, learning, connecting.* Academic Development Institute. www.adi.org. See Download ADI Publicatio