

Building a school-wide literacy assessment system from the ground up The Woodworth Story

Speakers:

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- ⇒ P. David Pearson

Collaborators

- ⇒ Lisa Sensale and Sapna Vyas, MSU
- ⇒ Kathy Dean, Pam Crookedacre, the coprincipals
- ⇒ The Woodworth staff

Organization for the Session

📖 Overview

📖 Context

📖 Goals

📖 Timeline of activities

📖 Lessons learned

📖 Next steps

Context: The Site

- 📖 Rural, predominantly white, middle to lower SES community (free and reduced lunch = 50%).
- 📖 Joined forces with CIERA to build an assessment system to monitor student progress and instruction
- 📖 Approvals all the way up the line

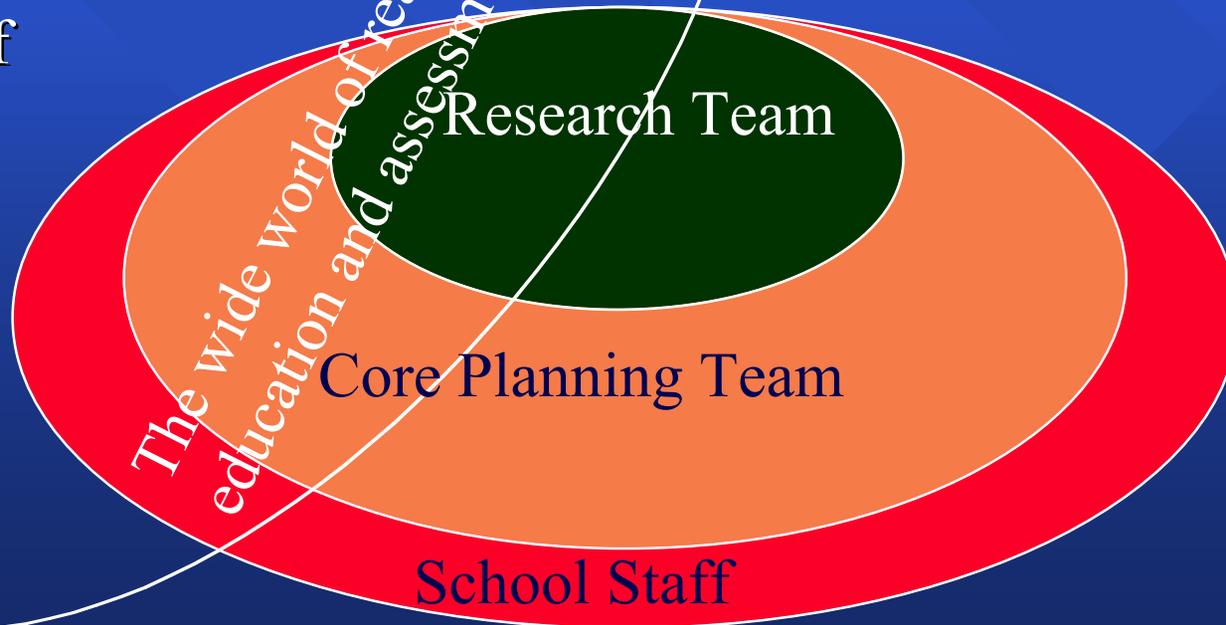
The overall strategy

📖 Create a structure of spheres of influence

➡ Research team

➡ Core planning team

➡ Staff



Overall Process

- 📖 Bottom up planning process with the core planning team and the staff
- 📖 Core planning team responsible for staff meetings
- 📖 Recurring event structure
 - ⇒ Monthly research team meetings
 - ⇒ Monthly meetings with a planning group of teachers and
 - ⇒ Monthly meetings with the staff as a whole.
 - ⇒ Annual summer meetings for development
 - ⇒ Annual report to the school board

Overall GOALS for the school

- 📖 Create and implement classroom assessments, Pre-K through 4
- 📖 Identify performance standards aligned with Leslie ELA curriculum and link to specific assessment tools
- 📖 Design a plan for reporting student progress to all constituents (students, teachers, parents, administrators, policy makers, public)
- 📖 Develop strategies for using assessment results to plan instruction and improve student achievement
- 📖 Identify a set of pilot assessment tools to use in a school-wide assessment system

Sidebar: What do we mean by an Assessment System?

- 📖 A system is a deliberate, consensual, negotiated, articulated group of assessments built with criteria of purpose and audience playing the most salient roles
- 📖 To be distinguished from various sorts of “collections”
 - ⇒ Every teacher chooses his or her own tool box
 - ⇒ School-wide tools, but unarticulated decision-making processes.

Assessment Systems

Client	Decisions to be Made Questions to be answered.	Assessment Tools
students	How am I doing? What shall I do next?	[Portfolio entries (self-evaluated) and/or feedback from benchmark tasks.]
teachers	Have the kids met my learning goals? How did my teaching go? How can I help Amy? Should Amy enter X?	->[Portfolio entries and Benchmark tasks] ->curriculum-embedded tests ->Informal diagnostic tools ->An array of converging evidence
parents	How is my child doing? Compared to the average bear?	->Portfolios/work samples ->Normed test of some sort
administrators	How effective is our program? How are our teachers doing?	[Aggregated data of some sort (portfolios, norm-referenced tests)]
policy makers	How well are schools meeting public expectations?	[Trends, over time, on some aggregated data (n r t would do just fine)]
taxpayers	How well is our money being spent?	[Trends, over time, on some aggregated data (n r t would do just fine)]

Assessment Systems

- 1. Are all of the important dimensions of the domain assessed?
- 2. Are the clients of the system getting the information they need to answer the questions they want answered?
- 3. Are clients making apt decisions-- decisions that meet students' curricular needs ? (consequential validity)

Where and how we started

📖 1998-99 goals:

- ⇒ Take stock
- ⇒ Set priorities
- ⇒ Build a school-wide writing system
- ⇒ Interview all important constituents to obtain a “baseline” of attitudes and beliefs about assessment

📖 1999-00 goals: Build spelling and phonics assessments

Some highlights from our work in the last two years

📖 As soon as we had completed stock taking, we knew we wanted to have something to show for our work right away----->

⇒ Creating a Woodworth schoolwide writing assessment

📖 Voted at the end of year 1 to ...

⇒ Creating a schoolwide spelling assessment

Writing: Issues to Consider

- 📖 Align with state writing assessment
- 📖 Align with effective instruction
- 📖 Provide information to help shape instructional decisions
- 📖 Inform decisions about grade level and school wide programs
- 📖 Respect developmental learning stages

Writing Assessment Development

Scoring Guide

- ⇒ Found a beginning model
- ⇒ Made adaptations

Developed grade level prompts

Administered assessment

Grade level scoring sessions

- ⇒ Scored Papers
- ⇒ Identified anchor papers

First Grade

1. Teacher asks students to close their eyes and think for 30 seconds about their favorite place.
2. Teacher asks questions: Where is your favorite place? When could you go there? Why?
3. Students draw a picture of their favorite place.
4. Students share ideas with their partner.
5. Students write their stories.

1st Grade Scoring Guide

Writing is on topic and shows development of topic with text matching picture; some details/examples. There is an attempt at forming a beginning and end. Author attempts to use varied descriptive words and sentence structures. The writing contains a blend of conventional and phonetic spelling. Demonstrates knowledge of appropriate placement of punctuation and capitalization. Surface feature errors do not interfere with understanding.

4th Grade Scoring Guide

The writing is focused on a topic and includes details. The writing shows a beginning, middle, and end; the writer may attempt to separate ideas into paragraphs. Author's voice/personality is evident through the use of descriptive words and simple and compound sentences.

Writing Assessment: Further Development

- 📖 Analyzed data
- 📖 Selected instructional goals for grade levels and school wide programs
- 📖 Planned and conducted workshops
- 📖 Developed and administered a second assessment
- 📖 Analyzed results
- 📖 Created a plan for communicating results and expectations to parents

Spelling: Issues to Consider

- 📖 Compatible with writing philosophy
- 📖 Sensitive to developmental stages of learning
- 📖 Avoid reinventing the wheel
- 📖 Spelling assessment or spelling program?

Investigated Spelling as an Element of Curriculum

- 📖 What should be taught?
- 📖 When should it be taught?
- 📖 How should it be taught?
- 📖 How should it be measured?

Conserving Our Natural Resources

The need for conservation

The earth is full of natural resources that we use every day. However, we have to be careful how we use these valuable resources.

If we cut down too many trees, the forests will disappear. Then there will be no trees to use to build houses or to make paper. There will be no place for wild animals and wild birds to live and hide. People will not be able to camp in the forests.

If we dump trash and garbage into the rivers and oceans, the waters will become polluted or dirty. The dirty water will be unhealthy for people to use. It will also be harmful to the fish and other water animals.

If we let factories pour smoke into the air, our air will become polluted. Polluted air can make our eyes sting and fill with tear. It can make paint on buildings fade and peel off. It can eat away metal. It can kill trees and hurt other plants. Polluted air hurts almost everything it touches.

Trees, water, and air are some of our most important natural resources. We need to take care of them so they will not be spoiled and wastes. This good use of natural resources is called conservation.

From the Michigan 4th grade MEAP

Green = 100 high frequency

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Green = high frequency Purple = common pattern

Blue = both high frequency and common pattern

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Light Green = 300 HF Red?violet? = more patterns

Brown = syllables and affixes

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Spelling Assessment

Developmental Assessment

⇒ Screening inventory

⇒ Feature inventory

Benchmark Assessment

⇒ End of year test

Embedded Assessment

⇒ Score writing samples for spelling

Developmental Assessment

Kathy Ganske

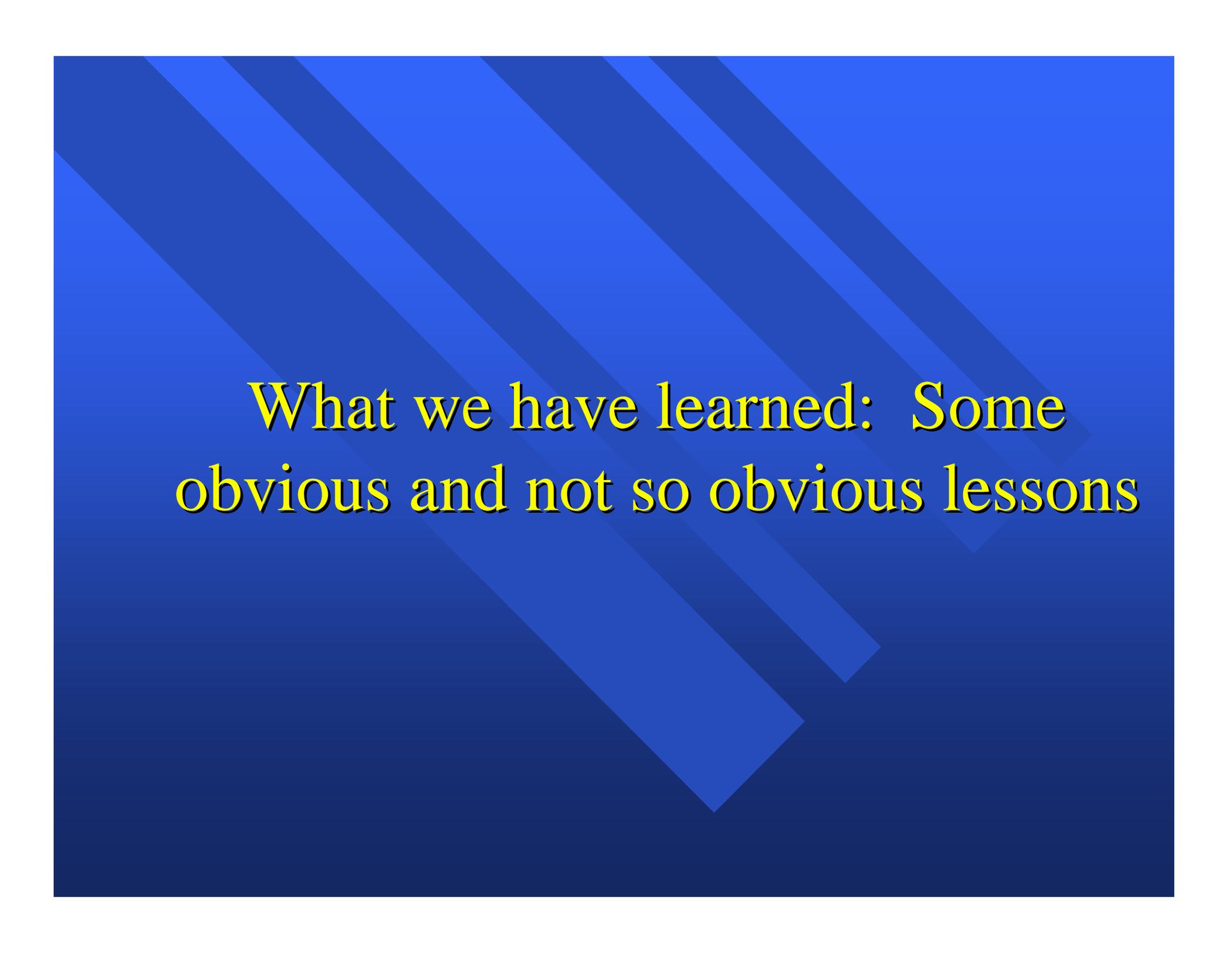
- 📖 Emergent Stage
- 📖 Letter Name Stage
- 📖 Within Word Stage
- 📖 Syllable Juncture Stage
- 📖 Derivational Constancy Stage

Benchmark Assessment

📖 Phonological patterns

📖 Inflections and morphological patterns

📖 High utility words

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What we have learned: Some
obvious and not so obvious lessons

Lesson 1: Levels of Independence

📖 Everybody operates at levels of independence

⇒ Frustration level

⇒ Instructional level

⇒ Independent level

📖 Determines the support and scaffolding you provide

📖 Independent level: Writing Assessment

📖 Instructional level: Spelling Assessment

📖 Frustration level: Reading Assessment

Lesson 2: Learning to Work from our Strengths

📖 When is it best to have ideas presented by

- ⇒ A fellow teacher
- ⇒ An administrator
- ⇒ A researcher

📖 What roles do we play in planning

- ⇒ Who represents the staff?
- ⇒ Who are the intellectual gophers?
- ⇒ Who provides the support?

Lesson #3: Sometimes you have to put the cart before the horse

📖 We still have NOT gone back to work on our standards

📖 And some day we will have to

📖 BUT if we did that right now, it would take valuable attention away from our assessment work

📖 And the current standards are OK, in the ball park

Lesson #4: Situated PD

- 📖 1. Internal agenda setting and responsibility
- 📖 2. Ownership--embedded in their needs
(e.g., spelling-phonics)
- 📖 3. Taking our time, rhythm and pace
- 📖 4. writing was a good start
- 📖 5. tension/dissonance between familiar and unfamiliar in our meetings
 - ⇒ a. comfort level
 - ⇒ b. collegiality
 - ⇒ c. conceptual seepage

Grade level versus cross grade level

Lesson #5: Leadership

📖 Internal leadership of the core team (can represent the pulse of the school) and communication--a kind of intimate collegiality

📖 Administrative leadership at the school level

📖 External leadership

⇒ support the effort

⇒ provide resources, including time

⇒ show up to help with the work

⇒ defend the effort to the skeptics

Anticipating the tough questions

Why didn't we just purchase one of the commercially available systems?

📖 such as

📖 Work Sampling

📖 New Standards

📖 First Steps

📖 Primary Language Record

📖 MLPP

Can't we make it happen faster?

📖 Sure....., but.....

Is it having any impact?

📖 Yes, but....

📖 The MEAP!!!

How can this be done without the external support provided by a group like CIERA?

📖 Helps to have a knowledgeable other

⇒ ISDs

⇒ Central staff

⇒ College level consultants

📖 BUT does not have to be a university group

Some findings from our research

📖 From our interviews with various constituents

- ⇒ Teachers
- ⇒ Administrators
- ⇒ Parents
- ⇒ Kids
- ⇒ School board
- ⇒ Community

How Important are Different Sources of Information?

	Classroom	School	External	Communication tools events	Community views
Teachers	●●●●●●	●	●●●	●●●●	●●
Parents	●●●●●	●	●	●●●●●	●
Kids	●●●●●●	●●●		●●	
Admin	●●●●●●	●●●●●●	●●●●●●	●●●	●
Sch Board	●	●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●	●●●●●

What Points of Reference Do People Use to Interpret Scores?

	Curriculum	Grade Level	Normative Individual	Normative School	Normative District
Teachers	●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●	●	●
Parents	●	●●●●●●●●	●●●●●	●●	●●
Kids			●●●●●●●●		
Administrators	●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●	●●●●●	●
Board	●●	●●●	●●●●●●		●●●●●●●●

Consequences: Where Do People Think the Onus Comes Down?

	Kids	Classroom/ Program	Teacher	School	District
Teachers	●●●●●●●●	●●●●	●●		
Parents	●●●●●●●●			●	●
Kids	●●●●●●				
Administrators	●●●●●●	●●●●●●●●		●●●●●●	●●●●
Board	●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●		●●●●●●●●	●●●●●●

What is Next?

📖 Keep on Truckin’

📖 This year: Refine Spelling, take on Reading

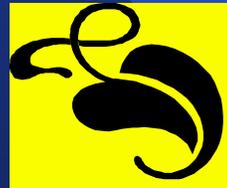
📖 Begin to worry about articulation across assessments?

📖 It really depends on where the staff as a whole wants to go

“I want assessment to be a part of what happens all the time in the classroom. It shouldn’t be an event; the MEAP is an event. Assessment should not be an event. What I would like to see is for it to be so much a part of what happens that we do not think about assessment any more than we think about turning on the lights in the morning.”

Our Response

- 📖 What have we learned as a result of the CIERA involvement?
- 📖 Has the fact that this is a research project changed the process for us?



The School's Response

- 📖 What has the school staff learned as a result of the CIERA involvement?
- 📖 Has the fact that this is a research project changed the process?



BENEFIT

- 📖 The research project provided the catalyst to bridge the gap between individual teacher needs and total school involvement.
- 📖 Identified 4 key ingredients to the success of this initiative.



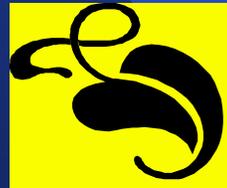
BENEFIT

📖 Education community looking for a quick fix.

📖 Pressures: time and resources.

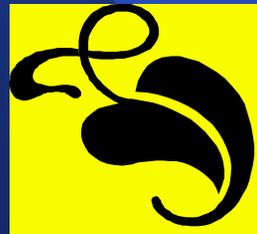
📖 Phenomenon: This year's new thing /last year's new thing

📖 Research project provided: longevity and structure



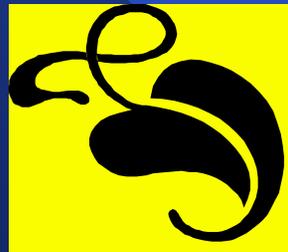
CHALLENGES

- 📖 Time requirements for staff, core team and administration.
- 📖 Financial commitments.
- 📖 Changes in staff.



WOODWORTH'S DECISION to BECOME INVOLVED

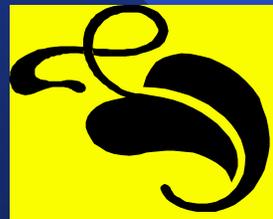
- 📖 New LA curriculum implemented in the winter of 1997
- 📖 Match to districts next step
- 📖 Important information which could impact other districts and students



Mirror for Reflection

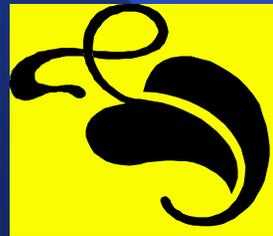
📖 The research project provide the staff with an opportunity to understand ourselves better.

📖 The research project provided needed data on the beliefs, needs and understandings of the various stakeholders in the education system.



Community of Learners

- 📖 Evolved over time.
- 📖 Staff commitment to the CIERA research project.
- 📖 Shared leadership in the building
- 📖 Building trust



Validation and Credibility

📖 Provided validation to the core team of teachers on their understanding and classroom practice. Validated what they knew.

📖 The connection to CIERA gave credibility to changes in practice the staff was asked do as a result of assessment work.

