



How can I become more of an instructional leader in the areas of writing and critical thinking?

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Background:

I had begun thinking about my own vision of the school before the initial ILEARN scores came out in the fall of 2019. In an ever changing educational world, I still believed that the fundamentals of education centered around writing and critical thinking. Our ILEARN scores simply reinforced that belief.

When I was teaching, I always felt that getting our students to become effective writers and critical thinkers was the most monumental of the curricula tasks. It was from those early wonders that my inquiry came to be. How could I be more effective at leading in these challenging curriculum areas?

Purpose:

My purpose is to transition from a predominantly managerial focused to leader to a more curriculum focused one. My most enriching conversations with staff are ones rooted in instruction and not day-to-day operations of the school.

Data research further focused this purpose to look primarily as how I can improve my leadership in the core instructional areas of writing and critical thinking. Getting students to think about their work and create writing that can clearly express what they are thinking is an essential skill, yet it's one that my teachers routinely say is the hardest to accomplish. To best lead my staff to show growth in these areas, I must first become a more sound leader

Wondering:

How can I become more of an instructional leader in the areas of writing and critical thinking?

Actions:

- Increase walkthroughs to provide enhanced feedback
 - Personal goal to double classroom visits from 2018-19.
- Offer to model best practices
 - Volunteer basis to allow me to come in and teach or assist teaching a

lesson focused on either critical thinking skills or writing.

- Lead training in new writing and reading programs
 - We adopted new curricula in both areas. I was involved in all trainings so I could best help teachers implement the programs.
- Add instructional discussions to weekly notes
 - This would include thoughts on data, curriculum implementation, or progress towards school goals.
- Lead new intervention analysis meetings
 - Bi-weekly meetings that started after winter break to discuss student data to form intervention groups for the next two week intervention cycle.

Data Collection:

- Rubrics on collected writing pieces
- Data tracking from intervention analysis meetings
- Logs of weekly notes to staff
- Logs on classroom visits and lessons led/assisted

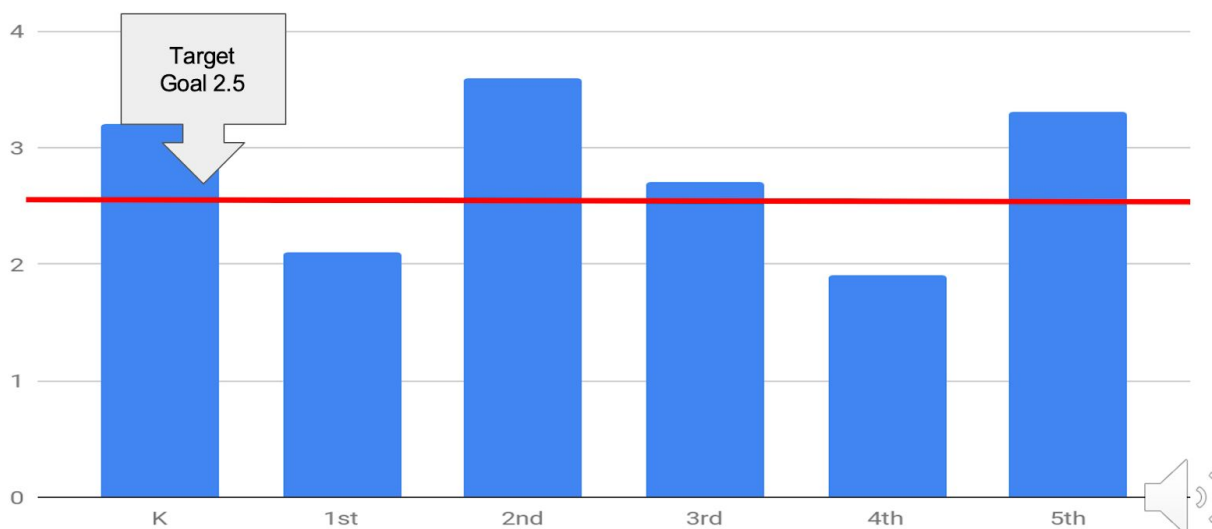
Weekly Visits & Lessons

Grade	Classroom Visits	Lessons Led/Supported
K	12	0
1st	13	1
2nd	10	0
3rd	10	0
4th	12	2
5th	15	4

The above graph illustrates the number of classroom walkthroughs achieved for each grade as well as the number of classroom lessons I was directly involved in presenting. I set a goal of at least doubling the number of walkthroughs I achieved in 2018-19 (from 3 to 6). Despite our early dismissal from the school year, I managed to visit every classroom at least five times, nearly hitting the yearly goal with two months left in the year before distance learning started. I also had an opportunity to lead or assist with classroom lessons in three different grades. This was purely a voluntary exercise by teachers. The fifth grade took the most advantage of this since both were either new to the grade or building.

Writing Rubric Analysis

Note: Grades based on state rubric scoring.



One of the focuses of implementing a new writing program was to see an increase in our rubric scores after our ILEARN analysis. Our target was to improve to a 2.5 target scores, which four of the six grade levels managed to achieve before we went to distance learning in mid-March. The other two grades saw significant improvement from their baseline rubrics.

My Discoveries:

- Noticed that the most impact as an instructional leader came in the grade that needed the most support (4th)
- Saw considerable growth in both writing and reading scores on rubrics and unit assessments.
- Increased amount of teachers discussing data outside of meetings. Increased advocacy and discussion on student progress and needs.

Where I am Heading:

2020-21 begins a new Student Improvement Plan cycle for our school. I want to use the progress I made personally on my inquiry as an instructional leader to expand the start we made on focusing on critical thinking and writing. Our SIP goals will center on these areas. As a veteran teacher of 19 years, I enjoyed getting into the classroom more often and will continue to focus on maximizing my classroom walkthroughs.

I saw the beginning of a cultural shift in the school. Even with the chaotic end to the school year, I could see the focus and discussion changing from more day-to-day management items to more instructional and data driven conversations. The result was a deeper look at each child and their needs and a commitment to address the areas of critical thinking and writing. It was a small start, but I am encouraged by the growth the school made and my own expanded understanding of instructional leadership.

Inquiry Brief

Nick South - IPLI Cohort 7



Background

- Reviewed ILEARN data from schools showing areas of need in critical thinking and writing.
- Analyzed my own daily data to see how I balanced managerial and instructional leadership tasks.
- Thought about where I wanted my school to go and what I needed to do to help get us there.



Inquiry Purpose

My purpose is to transition from a predominantly managerial focused to leader to enhance my knowledge in curriculum in order to continue to grow as an instructional leader. My most enriching conversations with staff are ones rooted in instruction and not day-to-day operations of the school.

Data research further focused this purpose to look primarily as how I can improve my leadership in the core instructional areas of writing and critical thinking. Getting students to think about their work and create writing that can clearly express what they are thinking is an essential skill, yet it's one that my teachers routinely say is the hardest to accomplish. To best lead my staff to show growth in these areas, I must first become a more sound leader.



Wondering

How can I become more of an instructional leader in the areas of writing and critical thinking?



My Actions

- Increase walkthroughs to provide enhanced feedback
- Off to model best practices
- Lead training in new writing program
- Support implementation on new reading program
- Add instructional discussions to weekly notes
- Lead new intervention analysis meetings



Weekly Visits & Lessons

Grade	Classroom Visits	Lessons Led/Supported
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Intervention & ILEARN Analysis

- Had conducted three meetings
- Meetings focused on how to best use intervention to help support reading and writing instruction
- Analyzed base test in Airways (Grades 3-5)
- Discussed areas of need and how to use new writing/reading programs to address them.



Leading Curriculum Implementation

- Led discussion with every teacher on writing progress, expectations
- Trained with teachers to help in implementation
- Provided feedback to teachers on best practice advice based on observations and walkthroughs

Nov 18-22 - Trained teachers practice Writing City to prepare for implementation

December - Work with your co-teacher to train them and plan out your Writing City curriculum for the second semester. Since we are starting mid-year, you can choose to start mid-year or start from the beginning. Whichever you choose, both teachers should do the same thing (for progress monitoring purposes)

After Christmas Break - Full Writing City Implementation.

Link to [LES Writing City Webinar Training](#) -

****Start at the 6 minute mark.

Published Writing Prompts Due Dates -

December 18 (Does not need to be Writing City - 3rd-5th should be typed - K-2 on paper)

February 7 (Should be first Writing City piece - Print PDFs to turn in - K can be on paper)

March 18

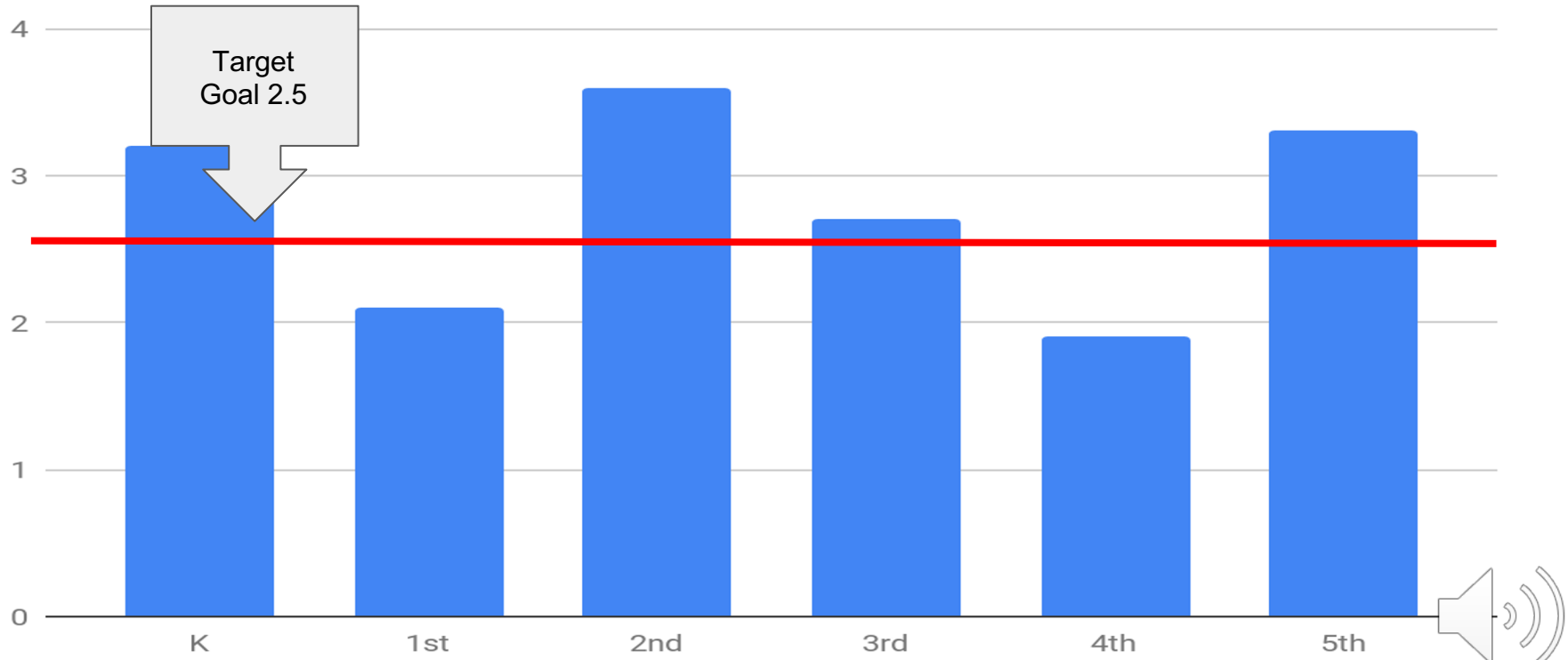
April 29

June 1



Writing Rubric Analysis

Note: Grades based on state rubric scoring.



My Discoveries

- Noticing support needed more for 4th grade to model and be an instructional leader
- Considerable gains in writing, better understanding in reading.
- Veteran teachers are ahead of newer teachers in writing progress
- Getting teachers to think about data and how to improve instruction has led to increased conversations with teachers that ask for advice or want to share classroom activity ideas



Where I am Heading...

- Continue to support teachers by focusing new SIP on writing and reading improvement.
- Attend all trainings with teachers to implement new math program for 2020-21.
- Continue to regularly schedule walkthroughs and provide feedback.
- Continue to offer to model best practices.
- Expand intervention analysis to focus on students in need.
- Continue my own personal growth in areas I am not as experienced.

