

MPPR Research Forum

September 19, 2013, Mercy College, NYC

The first research forum around the implementation of the MPPR was held on September 19 at Mercy College, NY. Twelve district and school building staff members attended the forum, including 7 superintendents, 2 assistant superintendents, 2 principals, and one BOCES coordinator. The forum was facilitated by Giselle Martin-Kniep, president and founder of Learner-Centered Initiatives, Ltd. and Communities for Learning. Also in attendance were Joanne Picone-Zocchia, lead author of the MPPR and Vice-President of Learner-Centered Initiatives, Ltd. and Communities for Learning; Patti Miller and Margie McGuire, LCI staff members. Researchers included Dr. Terri Orr, Bank Street College, Matt Clifford, American Institutes for Research, and Robin Elliser, independent consultant.

The districts were located on Long Island, and in the Westchester, Albany, Buffalo and Rochester areas. They were small to medium in size, ranging from districts with two principals to districts with 5 principals.

The primary focus of the forum was the process whereby districts used the MPPR in their first year and the role that evidence played in supporting rubric ratings.

What follows is a narrative of the district's implementation activities, and their uses of evidence.

Activities related to the adoption and use of the MPPR since 2011

District 1

In July 2009, the district adopted ISLLC standards and set up an evaluation model. In 2011, the superintendent shared the rubric with staff; the incorporation of the MPPR fit naturally. In June 2011, the superintendent and principals set goals and refined them during a summer retreat. There was a mid-year and end of year review that used the goals as the frame for the evaluation. Process was supported with templates and evidence collected by both the Central office staff and the principals.

District 2

In August 2011, the administration contract was up and the team selected the MPPR as their evaluation tool. The team did not do much with their assessment process for the rest of the year. In Jan 2012, the team unpacked the tool to become more familiar with it, and to examine and understand it. Over the course of 2012, principals began to consider what they would use as artifacts but the process was unstructured. In April 2013, the team used the MPPR as a guide for goal setting. Principals had building-level goals, but these were not connected to district goals. They collected evidence but the evidence was not used to allocate scores. There was some competition among principals in terms of the amount of evidence they collected. In August 2013, principals set goals again, in the context of the district strategic plan. The summer was used to connect the work with goals.

District 3

Due to attention to teacher evaluation, not much work was done with the MPPR in 2012 after its selection. Once the team had formal training on the MPPR in March, administrators reviewed the rubric. Central office staff went into buildings, attended departmental meetings, and shadowed principals to see what they were doing. In June 2013, principals and principal evaluators completed the rubric and

conferred about scores if these were different. As of this Fall, goal setting processes will be attached to the rubric.

District 4

The MPPR was adopted in 2011. The superintendent wrote the evaluation narrative about the principal without any input from the principal.

District 5

The district relied in an old evaluation document which has been in place for many years, as well as the MPPR. Principals and superintendent met every month but meetings do not involve any evidence collection or discussion. At the end of the year, the superintendent wrote an evaluation narrative.

District 6

As of October 2010, no one in the district was using any type of rubric. Principals had not been formally evaluated in 12 years, and teachers were evaluated every two years. In 2011, the superintendent and principals focused on learning how to use the Danielson Framework. In 2011 and 2012, principals collected evidence of their teacher observations and accompanying feedback. They also substantiated their work around performance tasks that were identified by the superintendent. In 2013, they set goals and reflected on their learning.

Conclusions

- Even though all the districts are in NY and most are small, comprising 2 to 5 school buildings altogether, there was great variability in districts' activities related to adoption and use from 2011-2013
- Differences existed in terms of time spent learning and reviewing the rubric, the evidence collected, who collected evidence (principal, superintendent), the role of goal setting in the use of the rubric, and the assignment of scores.

Experiences using evidence to support ratings

District 1

Evidence from principals and principal evaluators was used to justify the ratings. Principals' portfolios of their work is truly linked to their goals. This process has evolved over many years and is now focused on a purposeful collection of work. The review occurs over the course of an administrative retreat, in which principals use artifacts, compile the evidence and align it to the different domains using a template. The template assigns a number of points to each domain and the superintendent adds all the points at the end (up to 60 total). Principals decide which domains they value most and collected their evidence around the domains they focused on. They rank ordered the domains, and the superintendent counted the evidence around most important domains more than other evidence.

The superintendent evaluates all the principals. In the early Fall, the superintendent has meetings with principals to go over their goals for last year. Superintendent and principals review each of the domains and set goals based on them. They review and refine their goals, with the superintendent playing a greater role if the principal is new or needs support. A few weeks later, the superintendent shadows a principal all day, watching a pre- and post-observation, a faculty meeting and any other event. The

superintendent conducts a mid-year review of all the evidence collected and ties the evidence to the rubric. Evidence might include write up of observations, meeting notes, behavioral incidents, discipline diaries, etc. The primary lens of the review is the alignment of the evidence to the rubric. In addition to the mid and end of year review, the superintendent meets with principals once a month. To date, none of the principals has disputed their ratings.

One of the challenges that principals had was how to manage both domains and dimensions; they thought they needed to match the two at the same time. Some of them felt that they had to come up with more evidence.

District 2

The superintendent wanted to ensure that the Board would have the understanding of what it takes to support the work of principals since the principal's work is nested in a larger system. The superintendent proposed that the Board use the MSPR to conduct the mid-year and the end-of-year superintendent evaluation. The superintendent used a Board retreat to help the Board understand the tool so they could use it for their own self-reflection. The superintendent provided evidence of her own performance at the end of the year.

District 3

The superintendent and principals collaboratively analyzed each domain and dimension but had difficulties assigning numbers and scores, aside from the 4, 3, 2 and 1.

District 4

One principal struggled with capturing evidence of her own practice. The principal asked teachers to provide her with feedback on her work and role in supporting them. She focused on collecting evidence that would show her growth and made decisions based on that evidence. For example, the principal found that the evidence gathered was connected to "effective" category, and that this was appropriate to the principal's own goal. She found that the evidence collected crossed and applied to several domains and discovered a strong focus on alignment and sustainability. The principal submitted everything to the superintendent but has not had a conversation about the evidence.

The principal is in the process of narrowing her own goal, and is not particularly concerned about the number of points she will receive on the rubric.

District 5

Principals provided the superintendent with data that supported their goals for the year. The interpretation of that data was the superintendent's responsibility and the principals did not have many discussions about the superintendent's judgment. The superintendent focused the evaluation on the domains that were the focus of the principals' goals and work. Every principal had a primary focus that was somewhat different from other principals. Each principal completed a self-narrative by June 1st, that is separate from the superintendent's evaluation.

District 6

The assessment process is based on 60 points, but the assignment of points was not entirely based in the rubric. Because the superintendent values self-reflection, the principals' use of a self-assessment

process itself was worth 6 points. The use of goal setting/strategic planning sheet to identify a building-level goal, and a district-level goal was worth 10 points each. The goals were then aligned with the rubric, although without using Part 2 of the MPPR. Each principal produced a mini observation record (5-7 minutes per observation), which included their evaluations of up to 25 people in the district. The superintendent and principals met four times per year to review their instructional feedback in their logs. Logs included name of teacher, date, time, feedback given (using the Marshall rubric), as well as “stars” and “wishes,” sometimes about the use of instructional strategies, use of core texts, etc. The completed logs were worth 10 points. Goals were set by June and the review of goals and their attainment took place in 3 separate meetings during the year.

The superintendent then used the MPPR rubric to score each domain and used evidence logs to support ratings for each domain (of the 24 points that were connected to the rubric). This happens in July. To score a principal as effective they need to score 3.5 out of 4. Evidence collection was gathered through site visits, department and faculty meetings, parent concerns, agendas, letters to parents, feedback to teachers on the curriculum maps, and administrator focus observations in which the superintendent coached principals. Most of this evidence was qualitative. While the superintendent collected all of this evidence, principals were managing their goals and engaging in related activities. They had the opportunity to add evidence to the evidence collected by the superintendent.

The superintendent would like the process to be more focused on results from the work of principals and not on the processes they use (i.e., tangible changes in teachers’ practices and students’ learning).

Another challenge faced by principal is not being able to find evidence of items on the rubric that the superintendent does not attend to or consider (i.e., impact on State and National policy)

District 7

Principals and principal evaluators had a rating sheet that weighted Domain 2 much higher than the other domains since it is the largest domain in the rubric.

District 8

Principals and principal evaluators used the rubric holistically and collaboratively; principals collected evidence around the domains they focused on and brought their evidence to the superintendent. The entire rubric was converted to 59-60 points. A 3.5 at least would translate into 59-60 points. The superintendent set the context for the process by telling everyone that they were a 3 and that principals would not be penalized if they had less than a 3. The superintendent wanted to emphasize that this was about the work and the conversation. The only time a problem arose was if there was a difference in terms of the evidence principals had tied to the different domains. When that occurred, they erred on giving them the benefit of the doubt. The superintendent has indicated that the process would be far more rigorous next year.

Challenges and opportunities

Some of the challenges faced by principal evaluators and principals during this past year included determining what constitutes good evidence, clarifying what constitutes an “observation of principal practice,” having access to exemplary artifacts and other contrasting pieces of evidence, and having protocols that promote meaningful conversations.

Suggested refinements individual district processes

Four superintendents agreed that setting and monitoring goals plays a significant role in using the MPPR effectively. One superintendent would like to consider doing a mid-year review in which enough evidence can be gathered about certain domains, so that the remainder of the year can be used to focus on evidence of other higher priorities. Another reiterated the importance of moving away from compliance to authenticity by decoupling the dialogue and process in support of best practices from the assignment of points.