

# Showcasing & Sharing Successful School Redesign Initiatives

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



*Dr. Alice Lindsay, Director*  
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Just the other day I received an invitation to my high school reunion (I won't mention how many years has passed since that eventful day) and it caused me to think about many of the teachers that impacted my life, especially in junior and senior high school. I remembered feeling challenged and excited about learning in some classes yet in other classes wondering why I was learning a particular concept because I was sure I wouldn't use it in real life. It occurred to me the classes which inspired and energized me were taught by teachers who could relate the course content to what was relevant in my life. One of my English teachers was a master at making literature, written decades and even centuries ago, relevant to important times in our lives. She actively involved her students in activities that made connections between the

generations past and present.

In many schools in the state of Florida, education could be considered a spectator sport. The people who should be active participants, namely students, are often on the sidelines passively watching the performances of their teachers. Students may say they're bored and often question why they are learning concepts they will never use in life. This issue of the Successful School Redesign Initiative (SSRI) Newsletter describes how some SSRI schools are using, developing, and implementing Rigorous and Relevant instructional lessons to motivate and address the needs of their students. As you know, increasing the rigor for all students may require some new strategies to reach students who are currently not being successful in school and designing relevant lessons means teaching students to apply what they are learning to real-world situations.

Also included in this issue is an article highlighting the April SSRI Institute, Sustaining Redesign: *How To Keep the Music Playing* facilitated by Steve Barkley, Executive Vice President, Performance Learning Systems. He provided participants with many concrete examples and challenging questions to help them think about how to bring out the best in their colleagues and what it really means to work as a team. His positive, enthusiastic, and witty personality left participants wanting more.

In May, District Liaisons should be on the lookout for an e-mail outlining our plans for year four and a form for you to complete indicating your desire to remain in SSRI for another year. We hope all of our districts and schools will continue on with our project. We are also looking ahead to attending the FASA Conference held in Orlando, July 26-29 where several of our schools will be showcased. As a reminder FLICC will cover registration costs for District teams and FASA will reimburse some of the travel costs. For more information please contact us. We hope to see you there!

## A Thought-Provoking Day!

The final SSRI Institute for 2008-09 was held on April 20, 2009. Entitled *Sustaining Redesign: How to Keep the Music Playing*, the day featured Steve Barkley, the Executive Vice President of Performance Learning Systems.



Steve's masterful facilitation skills were just what we needed to help us reflect on the key concepts of our three years of SSRI work and lay the groundwork for sustaining the innovative practices the schools have been implementing. After challenging the table groups to agree on their definition of student achievement (which led to very interesting conversations), Steve used a carefully constructed series of questions to guide an analysis of the adult and student behavioral changes that are necessary to impact and improve school culture:

1. What are the changes in student behavior, performance, choices, effort, etc. that you believe are precursors to the improvement in student learning that you seek?
2. What changes must occur in individual staff/teacher practices to generate the changes you seek in students? What changes must occur in parent practices to generate the changes you seek in students?
3. Are there changes that need to occur in the way that staff members work with each other (staff relationships) in order for the desired individual staff member changes to occur?
4. What are the behaviors/practices of school leadership that are necessary to initiate, motivate, and support these changes?
5. How do you see your role in the changing behaviors of students, teachers, teacher leaders, and administrators?

As Steve walked us through this process, participants experienced a structure that they can now replicate to facilitate these conversations with their school faculties. It is evident from the questions that there were many opportunities to make connections with the major components of SSRI: the Learning Criteria, Rigor and Relevance and Professional Learning Communities.



Steve delved into the critical "third R," Relationships, as he worked with us on recognizing how collaborative faculty behaviors rely on "relational trust" as we move along a continuum from individuals working in isolation to teams with shared responsibility for student achievement.



Steve also introduced us to his latest work on student effort, which is summarized below. All participants received a copy of his book, *Tapping Student Effort: Increasing Student Achievement*

## Understanding the Value of Student Effort in Higher Achievement

According to Barkley, “Teachers don’t cause student achievement.....students do.” With this statement, Steve placed another challenge in front of the participants: to give more attention to maximizing *student* effort. He believes teachers’ efforts should be spent generating greater student effort and offered five strategies to help teachers explore the rewards of greater effort with their students:



1. Ask students to identify times in their lives that they were successful and attribute that success to one of the following factors: ability, effort, degree of difficulty or luck.
2. Define for students the four elements of effort:
  - Time...effort takes a commitment of time.
  - Persistence...Effort requires continuous action.
  - Practice...It should be both guided and independent
  - Repetition of success...You cannot quit after the first victory.
3. Teach students this formula:  $Effort \times Ability + Manageable Task = Success$ . The key is to recognize that effort is a multiplier that causes ability to increase. Thus the same effort is rewarded with increased success over time.
4. Let students experience the outcome of effort. Take them to a reading lab where they can measure their current reading level. Work with a reading coach to provide an eight week training plan to demonstrate that effort pays off as students’ reading skills increase.
5. Differentiate assignments to help all students learn the rewards of effort. For example, Barkley recommends three homework options for teachers working on a new topic: one for students who believe that with more practice they will master the content, another option for students who are convinced that they have already mastered the concept (a stretch assignment) and a third option for students who need more review and practice to master the content. Each assignment should require effort and be manageable.

For more information on this topic, read Steve Barkley’s book, *Tapping Student Effort: Increasing Student Achievement* (2007), published by Performance Learning Systems, Inc.

## Creating Time for Collaboration

A question that always comes up is, “How do we find the time to work collaboratively?” Steve described a strategy that he has proposed to schools to create a block of time that can be used for planning or training. Here are the steps:

1. Divide the student population by the **total number of certified staff** in your building. Typically this will give you a range of 18-20 students.
2. Have each staff member plan a 90-minute seminar that can be taught to two groups of students (36-40). Schedule a day during which half of the staff teaches their seminars, freeing the other half for planning or training.
3. Schedule the next planning/training day with the other half of the staff teaching their seminars.

This can be accomplished with no extra costs for substitutes, and students will have a quality learning experience.

## Time Well Spent

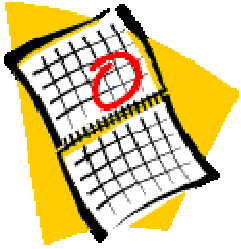
After working through this thought-provoking day, our participants left inspired with tools and strategies to continue to move forward with secondary redesign that will pay dividends for students and staff!



Article contributed by Christine Crocco, Senior Program Analyst, David C. Anchin Center, College of Education, University of South Florida.

## COACHES' CORNER

IMPORTANT DATES.....MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!!



- ✓ June 15: Deadline for submission of SSRI School Profile.
- ✓ July 26-29: FASA Conference with SSRI featured presentations. Conference information available at [www.fasa.net](http://www.fasa.net).

The next issue of the SSRI Newsletter will provide highlights from the SSRI Networking Conference. It will also feature schools in the SSRI family who are effectively using strategies garnered through their involvement with the SSRI initiative the past three years. Please share with our SSRI audience projects and problem solving activities that you have found to be effective tools.



Please send your success story by June 1, 2009 to your SSRI coach or directly to Larry O'Donnell at [odonnellnt@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:odonnellnt@tampabay.rr.com). Pictures are most welcome. Please include contact information so additional follow-up can be done if needed. Thanks for your help in making this newsletter a success!

***Martin County High School and Interlachen High School have contributed the articles that follow on the next two pages, highlighting successful activities that have evolved through participation in SSRI. Your school can be featured next!***



## Martin County High School (MCHS)

A Tradition of Excellence: A+ in Academics, Athletics, Arts and Activities

Joining the SSRI initiative has proven to be a transforming activity for MCHS. When the SSRI Leadership Team attended the initial meeting with Dr. Daggett and was asked to review the learning criteria and develop a plan, the team took ownership of the redesign of the school's focus. After teacher-led meetings and much discussion, the first year's focus became clear. A plan to build relationships, teacher-to-teacher, student-to-teacher and student-to-student, was implemented. Activities including a ROPES teambuilding course for teachers, monthly teacher, employee and student Tiger PRIDE recognitions, and professional learning communities were initiated. The teachers were also re-assigned to grade-level teams to further develop relationships with colleagues in other disciplines. This proved helpful in laying the foundation to move the school to further address rigor and relevance in a supportive, collaborative environment.

Recognizing the differing levels of comfort and knowledge of using Quadrant D lessons, this year the SSRI Leadership Team's focus has been on increasing the rigor and relevance of instruction through a differentiated approach to professional development. After an initial review of the Rigor/Relevance Framework, teachers were assessed on their working knowledge and use of Quadrant D lessons. A SSRI subcommittee was formed to create the professional development plan with the goal that each teacher, or team of teachers, would submit a lesson for review, approval and submission by year's end. Mrs. Ellie Thompson, SSRI member and math teacher, has led the process and created a tiered-approach to assigning teachers to the beginning, intermediate or advanced group. Teachers in the advanced group, led by Collaborating On-line for Rigor and Relevance (CORR) participant, Jamie Herd-Tesson, formalized and enhanced lessons they had previously created and/or taught. Each lesson was self-evaluated using a rubric and reflection questions before being uploaded onto a common drive for all teachers to view.

Questions to help you assess whether or not your activity is a quadrant D lesson.

1. What explicitly in your directions or description proves that there is a real-life connection for this assignment? Do not assume that people will be able to formulate the connection themselves; it has to be evident in the description or part of the assignment.
2. What skills are the students learning on their own? Students need to discover and learn part of the assignment on their own without the teacher's input. The assignment needs to be geared so that the students are learning higher level material on their own.
3. Does your project include other disciplines or subjects?
4. Have you used question wording such as predict, evaluate, analyze, synthesize, etc? If not, please change wording to the highest level of Bloom's Taxonomy.
5. Could someone else easily complete your assignment without your input? The purpose of these activities is for someone not in your subject area or with your background knowledge to be able to accurately complete your activity.
6. Does your scoring rubric or guide correctly award points for appropriate answers?
7. Are there any spelling or grammar errors? Please spell check and proof read your assignment. Also, please have a colleague not in your subject area read your project.

The beginning and intermediate groups are progressing through the lesson creation with direction and training from the subcommittee. At year's end, the subcommittee, with the help of other SSRI members and our SSRI Coach, Mrs. Chris Kisner, will evaluate each lesson and provide feedback and final acceptance.

One activity that proved to be most effective in the process was the immersion of teachers into a Quadrant D activity. On an in-service day, each teacher was given the choice of four relevant issues facing MCHS. During the day, in teams of 4-5, teachers had to work the Quadrant D lesson through addressing their chosen issue, including research, evaluation and presentation of an action plan. Feedback on this activity was extremely positive. There was a new-found understanding of what it is like to think and act through a rigorous and relevance activity.

Perhaps the most exciting result is the creation of a student-led, agency-supported Teen Health Expo. Students in the Academy of Health Sciences are working with local agencies and students in Math, English, Marketing, TV Productions, Spanish, Science, Health, Leadership and other classes to present the Expo. What started as a small activity has turned into a school-wide, collaborative effort. Students and staff have benefited from the rigorous activities, including survey creation, statistical analysis, research, business partner-student mentoring, translated media materials, and district and community involvement. We are proud of the progress we are making and look forward to implementing all the Quadrant D lessons.

## INTERLACHEN HIGH SCHOOL (IHS) STUDENTS ADD A FOURTH “R,” RALLY!



On March 18, 2009, 39 red-shirted teenagers headed out in the dark from the Interlachen High School media center along with their principal, two social studies teachers, media specialist, and a parent volunteer on a mission to Tallahassee, Florida to attend the Florida PTA’s “Rally on Tally.” Who are these students? If you haven’t heard already, it is a group of young political activists from Interlachen High School called HOPE (Helping Others Pursue Education) who are outraged that they are on the receiving end of the current educational crisis in our state.

These young people joined forces when they learned that 13 annual contract teachers at IHS would possibly be non-renewed for the following school year (some teachers among them are also coaches at IHS). These students want to get the word out about this dilemma and have been busy making contact with various student groups around the state, business/community leaders, and other concerned citizens to make their voices heard.

The HOPE students were quite active while in Tallahassee, speaking with as many legislators as possible, passing out HOPE business cards, and expressing their concerns to all who would listen.



While on the field trip, the students were able to visit the State Capitol Building, participate in a simulated session in the House of Representatives, and to hear a presentation in the Supreme Court. It was an outstanding and informative day for the students. Mrs. Mathe, IHS principal says, “The students excite us all...their desire to oversee this grassroots effort from forming a political action committee to taking real action on a grand scale is what we, as educators, strive for. They make us all proud, and I hope and pray that their message is heard and heeded at the highest levels.”

# Florida and the Islands Regional Comprehensive Center at ETS

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Florida and the Islands Comprehensive Center (FLICC) is operated by Educational Testing Service (ETS). The Center is one of 16 regional centers funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The mission of the regional technical assistance centers is to help build capacity of state departments of education to assist low-performing districts and schools close the achievement gap and meet the goals of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. FLICC, located in Tampa, FL serves the state of Florida and the territories of Puerto Rico and U.S. Virgin Islands.

The goals of the Center are focused on 5 priorities:

1. Improving teacher quality
2. Enhancing school and district leadership quality
3. Implementing data and research-based strategies to turn around low performing schools
4. Creating strategies to meet the needs of special populations
5. Increasing community and stakeholder involvement

The Center offers technical assistance in the following areas:

- Implementing school improvement efforts to help meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) requirements
- Identifying and adopting instructional and assessment methods that have been proven effective through scientifically based research, especially for students with special needs
- Designing programs and strategies and allocating resources to recruit, train, and retain talented teachers and school leaders
- Enhancing assessment and accountability systems

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