

Section VII – The Teaching Profession

As a life-long learner, I continuously analyze, critic and reflect on my profession. I am eager to learn effective techniques to assess student progress, ways to apply the content to the real world and even motivate at-risk students. I put what I have learned into practice and share the results with surrounding teachers. I motivate teachers to use writing across the curriculum in all mathematics classrooms to help students develop mathematical reasoning skills to ensure growth in reading scores and mentor novice teachers/students teachers to ensure they too have high expectations of themselves and their teaching. The passion I have for learning expands far beyond the walls of my classroom to ensure success of students across the district.

In the Spring of 2013, I represented Harnett County Schools Middle School math department at a regional level conference on Smarter Balanced Assessments. To share the impact these assessments would make across the district, I conducted a presentation to district level administrators and the middle school director on the features and benefits of Smarter Balanced Assessments and compared these assessments to previous and current assessments. Presenting to administrators, however, is not enough to change the way educators across the district teach each child to think or reason! To effectively increase rigor and relevance in classrooms across the district, it was necessary to increase the rigor and relevance in my own classroom. The knowledge gained from this conference had an incredible impact on the high academic standards of my assessments and daily lessons, which in turn impacts student growth. This year, rather than multiple-choice tests, all students were assessed through open-ended questions that required them to use mathematical reasoning to provide evidence of understanding, conduct error-analysis, create problems for a solution that was already given, apply the content to real-world scenarios, etc. This transition was a process that changed the way students processed new information and communicated their understanding. The positive impact

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it made on my classroom will assist me in motivating, supporting and encouraging teachers across the district to make similar transitions to increase the rigor and relevance in their classroom to promote further growth in their students. Through authentic assessments, I will provide a positive outlook to fellow educators that with support, students will use mathematical reasoning to prove high levels of understanding, regardless of their current academic challenges.

But as teachers across the district integrate high levels of rigor and relevance into their classroom, they need to have the confidence to experiment with new lessons, activities and assessments without their evaluation being affected. For this reason, the way teachers are evaluated must change. To judge a teacher's effectiveness based on two short observations (for non-renewal teachers) is simply unacceptable. Monthly snapshots must be documented for each teacher to ensure students and teachers are conducting themselves in the utmost level of professionalism. Those teachers who are consistently neglecting to perform their duties should be placed on an individualized plan to help support the growth and development of that teacher. Frequent interactions with instructional coaches or administrators and mandatory professional development will help to guide these teachers towards high standards. In addition, teachers, to some degree must be held accountable through test scores. Assessing growth is vital data that can be collected to ensure students are increasing their level of achievement. By combining frequent snapshots and growth made through student scores, districts, schools, and teachers will gain more respect for the responsibility they have in teaching students throughout the entire year, and not simply on an End-of-Year assessment score. Exceptional teachers will not go unnoticed, and teachers that need additional support will receive the guidance they need prior to the end of the year. Together, we will continuously hold fellow teachers to high professional standards of the education system in order for our students to develop a vast depth of knowledge.