



## Workshop Guide

# Making Assessments Work for You



Students are assessed more than ever before, but what's a teacher to do with all those numbers and notes? *Making Assessments Work for You: Using Data to Lead Instruction K-5* is a 104 minute DVD that features two simple protocols teachers can use to move from analyzing assessment data to designing thoughtful lessons.

This video can help any teacher or school staff get more out of professional learning groups, lesson observations, and team meetings, as well as forge stronger connections between assessment data and instructional design.

Tammy Mulligan and Clare Landrigan are veteran coaches and curriculum coordinators. They are the founders of Teachers for Teachers, a literacy consultation service based in Lexington, Massachusetts.

This viewing guide is designed to support your viewing and help you get the most out of the Making Assessments Work for You DVD. It includes reflective questions for each chapter, as well as additional readings to support your viewing. You can use these questions to guide your viewing and self-reflection, or to focus conversation during team meetings. The guide is divided by the chapter headings for each section of the DVD.

## **Introduction**

- Clare and Tammy talk about how they help teachers simplify assessment analysis, and how schools might rethink how data is used. Think about your school's assessment system. Who reviews assessment data? What process do you currently use to analyze data? How are teachers involved in the process?
- Tammy and Clare talk about looking at assessments and comparing them to student performance in the classroom. How might you incorporate student work into the assessment process?
- Tammy and Clare encourage teachers to look beyond numbers and levels and consider students when reviewing assessments. How do teachers in your school connect numbers, levels, and student work samples during meetings?

## **Additional Reading:**

- Are you drowning in data? You may want to read Tammy and Clare's article, *From "Data Drowning" to "Data Wise": Helping Teachers Make Sense of*

*Assessments*. Teachers may want to read this article before viewing the DVD:

<http://www.choiceliteracy.com/public/794.cfm>

- If you're thinking about implementing or refining existing data teams in your school, you may want to read Tammy and Clare's article, *Creating Data Teams*:

<http://www.choiceliteracy.com/public/877.cfm>

## **Part I - 1st Grade Learning Team Meeting with Clare**

In Part I, Clare Landrigan leads a first-grade team of teachers and administrators as they examine school and individual classroom data, and then use the information to brainstorm instruction for individual students, small groups, and whole-class lessons.

### **Greetings and Setting an Agenda**

#### **Reflective/Discussion Questions:**

- Clare starts the meeting by reviewing the agenda and protocol in the opening discussion.

### **Meeting Protocol**

- Agenda Setting
- How's It Going? (Sharing Out)
- New Learning (article, video, or demonstration lesson)
- Personal Action Plan
- Review of Meeting and Documentation

How is this format similar to your team meetings? How is it different?

- What meeting protocols do you already have in place? What might you change?
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- What do you see as the pros and cons of time limits for agenda items?

## Additional Reading:

- If you would like to read more about how Tammy and Clare use meeting protocols that support teachers in discussing student learning and working collaboratively, read *From Congeniality to Collegiality: Protocols for Meetings and Observations*:

<http://www.choiceliteracy.com/public/694.cfm>

## Taking A Closer Look At Data

- Clare shares how the team of teachers come together on a monthly basis to review and talk about the assessments that have been administered during that month. Teachers have opportunities to review data individually, in partners, and as a group. How frequently do teachers come together to talk about data in your school? Do you have time built into the calendar to review data on a regular basis?
- The first-grade team review spelling inventory data that was recently administered to students. Literacy specialist Mary Ward shares grade-level data with the team and asks teachers to think the numbers. She asks the following questions:
  - What does the data tell us as a grade level?
  - What does the data tell us about individual students?
  - How can the data guide our instruction?
  - How might these same questions be used in looking at data with teachers in your own school? What other questions might you ask?

## New Learning

- Clare talks about the importance of teacher choice. The teachers share their classroom experiences, discussing what they had tried during the last month in their writing workshops. Even though teachers in the group were all working on the same writing unit, they analyzed different aspects of the unit. Clare points out that giving teachers choice promotes teacher expertise in different areas. How might you include more teacher choice as you work in grade-level teams with assessment data?
- The purpose of reflecting on assessments, curriculum, and student work is to lift the quality of instruction. How might you provide teachers with more on-

going opportunities to work with colleagues? How might you strengthen connections between team meetings and curriculum design?

### **Looking At Student Writing**

- Teachers work with partners and individually as they look through samples of student work from their classrooms. Teachers identify strengths found in the students writing. Clare listens in on conversations. How does Clare support teachers as they analyze student work?
- Clare summarizes the conversations she heard as she listened in, and shares with the group many strengths that were identified in the student writing. Clare also makes that many of these strengths were goals that the teachers had been working on as a team (i.e., teachers wanted to build student stamina in writing; teachers commented that they noticed students were producing more writing). How does this reporting out by Clare move the meeting forward?
- The teachers seem genuinely invested in learning together. Think about a team of teachers that you work with that collaborates well. What makes the collaboration possible? Why does it work?

### **Looking at Curriculum**

- Clare and the teachers review their curriculum map, looking ahead to the next four weeks of writing instruction. The first-grade teachers will be moving into the genre of poetry. What is the value of common mapping within a grade level?
- As the first-grade team thinks about their upcoming poetry unit, Clare encourages them to consider essential concepts at that grade level. How do you help teachers keep essential concepts at the heart of instructional decisions?

### **Personal Action Planning**

- Clare leads a discussion of next steps for putting ideas into practice. Teachers are encouraged to try one thing in their classroom, and come back to the group next month and share what worked. How do you help teachers link professional development to specific actions in their classrooms

- The power of personal action planning in this segment is the fact that it is continuous. How might you organize meetings so that teachers have more time to collaborate with peers?

## **Review and Documentation**

- Clare reviews the group's next steps. She also asks the teachers how she can best support them and what resources they may need. What strategies have you found to be most effective for providing resources to teachers?

## **School Extensions:**

### **Review Your Local Assessment System**

Have your grade-level team take some time and review and reflect on the assessments that you currently administer to students. Does everyone have a common understanding of the purpose behind the assessments?

### **Discuss the following questions as a team:**

- What is the purpose for giving these assessments?
- What do you hope to learn from these assessments?
- Do any of the assessments give duplicate information?
- Do all assessments need to be given to all students?
- How is the data reviewed?
- How often are teachers able to work together to look at data and student work?
- How is the data used to guide and inform instruction?
- What changes might be made to ensure that the assessments and data gathered are meaningful?

## **Additional Reading:**

In *Moving from Data to Practice*, Tammy and Clare share how a common database within a school can support a school in looking at data and lessening the assessment load. You can click the following link to access the article:

<http://www.choiceliteracy.com/public/798.cfm>

## **Part II - 5th Grade Data Analysis and Lesson Planning with Tammy Mulligan**

In Part II of the DVD, Tammy Mulligan works with a team of fifth-grade teachers and literacy coaches to consider implications of a recent comprehension assessment. The group uses the findings from the assessment to design a demonstration lesson Tammy leads, and the program closes with a discussion among the teachers of observations from the lesson.

### **Greetings and Setting the Agenda**

- Tammy reviews the protocol that the fifth-grade team uses for analyzing data. How does the protocol help the teachers as they tackle the data?

### **Protocol for Looking at Data**

- Analyze student work.
- Write the issue to be explored.
- What do you notice?
- What questions do you have?
- Select one question to investigate.
- Develop an action plan to do.
- Reassess with protocol next session.

### **Analyzing Student Data: What Do You Notice?**

- Tammy asks teachers to look through the comprehension assessments and jot down what they notice. Tammy uses open-ended prompts - how do open-ended questions empower teachers?
- Tammy explains that her role as teachers analyze student data is to listen. How is this similar to or different from your role when teachers review assessment data?

### **Analyzing Student Data: Compare with Classroom Samples**

- Tammy guides teachers as they compare what they notice in the data to what they see in their classrooms. Teachers use a variety of student work to examine student performance. Artifacts included conference notes, book logs, and reader's notebooks. What are other ways you might compare data to student performance?

- Tammy talks about the importance of encouraging teachers to back up generalizations by asking the teachers for documentation. What other strategies do you use to help teachers move beyond generalizations about data.

### **Choosing a Question to Investigate**

- The teachers generate a list of reading comprehension topics they wish to investigate. As a team they decide to explore identifying the "big idea" and note-taking. What are the benefits of a shared topic of investigation across a grade-level team?
- If you would like to download a copy of the template, click on this link:  
<http://www.choiceliteracy.com/planningform.pdf>

### **Additional Reading:**

In their article, *Structuring the Coaching Conference* Tammy and Clare share how they use district learning goals, assessment data, and teacher interests in their coaching. To read this article click on the following link:

<http://www.choiceliteracy.com/public/717.cfm>

### **Planning the Lesson/Choosing a Focus for the Observation**

- Tammy and the fifth-grade team of teachers plan the demonstration lesson together. They use the anchor lesson template introduced in the previous section for the planning process. What do you see as the benefits of having all of the teachers participate in the planning process? What are the roadblocks that may prevent you from implementing a similar collaborative process with teachers?
- At the end of the planning process Tammy asks the teachers to each choose a different component of the lesson to watch. What are the benefits of having teachers choose different areas of the lesson to focus on as they observe and take notes? What are the drawbacks?



## Demonstration Lesson

- In Tammy teaches the demonstration lesson that the team planned together. The focus of the lesson is to help students identify the big idea (inferring theme) and note-taking (finding evidence to support thinking). After watching the video, how might you change how you approach the planning and teaching of demonstration lessons?
- As you watch the demonstration lesson try one of the observation forms the teachers use. You can access at the links below. Here are forms Tammy and Clare use with teachers in focusing in on specific aspects of planning and observing the lesson or teaching activity:

<http://www.choiceliteracy.com/SampleDebriefForms1.pdf>

These forms are less structured, allowing for more open-ended response and can be used during the observation of a demonstration lesson:

<http://www.choiceliteracy.com/SampleDebriefForms2.pdf>

## Additional Reading:

- Are you having trouble getting into classrooms for demonstration lessons? Tammy and Clare offer strategies for building the trust needed for demonstration lessons in their article *Opening Classroom Doors*. You may want to make copies of this article for teachers viewing the DVD:

<http://www.choiceliteracy.com/public/708.cfm>

## Small Groups

- Students work in small groups identifying the big idea found in the text and finding supportive evidence. This is an example of gradual release. What do you notice about the students? What is Tammy's role? How is she continuing to support the adult learners observing the lesson?
- This segment provides scaffolding for students as they are trying out new strategies. What scaffolding is provided to the adult learners as they design lessons that link assessments and curriculum?

## Teacher Debrief

- Tammy has each teacher share something from their notes. This gives everyone a job or role, and provides an opportunity for everyone to contribute. What methods do you find effective for demonstration lesson debriefs?

## Additional Reading:

- For more advice on debriefs, you may want to read the article *Tips for More Effective Debriefing Sessions* and share it with colleagues:

<http://www.choiceliteracy.com/public/694.cfm>

## Action Plans and Next Steps

- Tammy summarizes possible next steps for teachers to take with students. Teachers then use monthly planning sheets to create action plans. How might you use a similar format with teachers? What are the benefits of such forms?

## Additional Reading:

You can click on the link below to view a sample action plan used with an individual teacher. This plan serves as a record of what was modeled; the goals the teacher and coach set; the discussion they had; and the action steps the teacher and coach planned together:

<http://www.choiceliteracy.com/actionplan.doc.pdf>

## School Extension:

### Better Meetings

Are you looking for a structure to talk about student data as grade level teams? If you are having trouble getting started in using data and student work with grade level teams, try using the protocol that Tammy used with the fifth-grade team at your own grade level team meetings.

## **Protocol for Looking at Data**

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- Reassess with protocol next session.