

The Virginia School-University Partnership

Report on Professional Development Conferences from 2011 - 2012

Connecting Teacher Performance and Student Progress: Student Achievement Goal Setting on Friday, September 23 focused on how teacher evaluation can be fairly connected to student performance. Dr. Leslie Grant, from Old Dominion University, explored with the ninety-one participants the approaches, in addition to using the Virginia Student Growth Model, that are available for making this connection part of an equitable evaluation system. After establishing the research-based practice of using evidence of student progress as a significant element in the teacher evaluation process, Dr. Grant concentrated on how to design and implement student performance goal setting for the vast majority of educators for whom SOL data are not available. After being introduced to goal setting based on student achievement data through a series of hands on activities and simulations, participants were given the opportunity to assess the validity and reliability of various measures of student growth. By the end of the workshop, participants had gained a working knowledge of how to collect and assess student achievement data that can be incorporated into an evaluation system which is effective for all educators.

Examining Mathematics Instructional Quality Using the M-Scan Tool on Tuesday, September 27, was led by Dr. Robert Berry, The University of VA, and Dr. Temple Walkowiak, North Carolina State University. The twenty-nine participants learned about a new tool designed to help teachers translate the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) process standards into practice. Developed by researchers at the University of Virginia, the Mathematics-Scan (M-Scan) is an observational tool which provides a framework of mathematics instructional quality for teachers. The M-Scan examines *Mathematics Instructional Quality* by assessing the quality of mathematical tasks, the nature of mathematical discourse, the use of mathematical representations, and the teacher's demonstrated knowledge of the mathematical content. To assess the quality of tasks, the M-Scan examines the dimensions of *structure of the lesson*, *cognitive demand*, *problem solving*, and *connections and applications*. For the nature of the discourse, the M-Scan considers *explanation and justification* and *mathematical discourse community*. To examine the use of representations, the M-Scan considers *multiple representations* and *students' use of mathematical tools*. For the teacher's demonstrated knowledge, the M-Scan measures *mathematical accuracy*. The nine dimensions (in italics above) are linked to NCTM's Principles and Standards and the Virginia Mathematics Standards of Learning. This workshop gave administrators, instructional leaders, and elementary and middle school teachers the opportunity to envision high-quality mathematics instruction through classroom video observations, concrete examples, and interactive activities. Participants learned how to use the framework of the M-Scan to reflect on and improve the teaching of mathematics.

Writing Across the Curriculum in Grades Three – Five on Monday, October 3, led by Dr. Jane Hansen, UVA, and other faculty from The Central Virginia Writing Project, explored using writing across the curriculum to enhance instruction and engagement in grades three – five. The seventy-two participants engaged as writers themselves in order to experience how writing can be used to deepen understanding in all subject matters. Workshop attendees were exposed to current children's literature that can be used as mentor texts for this age group and explored different formats that writers use when they write across the curriculum. Participants left with creative, practical ideas to not only help their students improve the depth of their writing but also excite their students about writing across the curriculum.

Differentiation: Making the Journey and Meeting the Challenge on Friday, October 14, was presented by Dr. Kay Brimijoin, from Sweet Briar College. This workshop was designed for educators who wanted to clarify their understanding of differentiation and expand their knowledge of leadership skills and pedagogy that support and enhance effective differentiation. The forty-three participants examine data that show how differentiation can promote student success and will see examples of learning environments, assessment techniques, and management strategies that empower teachers to differentiate effectively.

Planning Effective Small Reading Group Instruction in Grades K – 2 was presented by Susan Thacker-Gwaltney, UVA's McGuffey Reading Center (Hampton Roads) on Tuesday, October 25 and again on Tuesday, December 13 in order to accommodate demand from 83 participants. The workshop addressed how to plan differentiated small group literacy instruction geared to the needs of young readers in grades K-2. Participants learned how to implement three lesson-planning frameworks for small groups based on the students' literacy stage and assessed need. At the end of the training, participants walked away with a multitude of hands-on instructional activities suitable for students in primary grades.

Teaching and Assessing the Social Studies SOL at Higher Cognitive Levels on Wednesday, October 26, was presented by Joan Spence Harper. Using research-based strategies, Bloom's Taxonomy, and the SOL Curriculum Framework, the ninety-four participants examined ways to instruct the SOL delineated content at higher cognitive levels. SOL test format was

reviewed as well as guidelines for good assessment practices. Participants examined ways to assess at higher cognitive levels utilizing multiple choice items. Other means of assessing student mastery of content and skills were also discussed.

Enhancing the Emotional Quality of Teacher-Child Interactions in PreK and KG Classrooms on Friday, November 11, was led by Leslie Booren and Allison Leach, faculty from UVA's Center for Advanced Study of Teaching and Learning (CASTL), who guided thirty-six participants through a series of teaching practices that have been linked with more effective and more emotionally supportive teacher-child interactions. In this seminar for prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers, participants learned more about high quality classroom environments that are marked with positive climates, sensitivity and flexibility. Presenters focused on specific teacher behaviors related to emotionally supportive classrooms, and provided a variety of video examples and activities applicable to these concepts.

Word Study: Using Spelling-Meaning Connections to Build Vocabulary in Grades 4-12 on Monday, November 14, was led by the renowned creator of PALS, Dr. Marcia Invernizzi, from UVA's McGuffey Reading Center. The audience of eighty-six Classroom Teachers, Special Educators, Reading Specialists, and Instructional Leaders explored how to use spelling-meaning connections to build student vocabulary knowledge in grades 4-12. Participants learned the principals of generative vocabulary instruction, which harnesses the power of word roots and affixation to generate the meanings of multiple words within a root family. Since comprehension of narrative and informational texts is dependent on understanding the vocabulary, this generative approach to teaching content-specific academic vocabulary is essential to improving reading test scores. Participants engaged in hands-on activities that modeled critical thinking about how written words work to represent meaning.

Rigor with Nurturing: Preparing for Technology Enhanced Questions on the new Mathematics SOLs on Tuesday, February 28, was presented by Dr. Dan Mulligan, in his usual engaging style! This workshop provided two hundred and ninety-two participants with instructional and assessment strategies to prepare each student for the higher thinking level required by the technology enhanced items contained in the new Mathematics SOLs. After the workshop, participants gave rave reviews to Dr. Mulligan and to the complete file of the strategies and resources that were modeled and made available electronically.

Algebraic Thinking in Early Childhood Education (Grades K -3) on Thursday, March 22, was presented by Megan Murray, from UVA's Mathematic Outreach Program. In this workshop, participants engaged in a variety of mathematics activities designed to help them define algebraic thinking, understand the learning trajectory for early algebra, and identify where algebra is inherent in the mathematics they teach. A particular focus was on the Virginia Standards of Learning for grades K-3 and how algebraic reasoning can and should be developed alongside arithmetic concepts and skills. Activities highlighted the use of process standards (problem solving, connections, reasoning and proof, representation, and communication) as a way to think about developing curriculum that encourages algebraic reasoning. The workshop was highly interactive, providing participants with the opportunity to solve engaging mathematics problems, to discuss their solutions with colleagues, and to identify the algebraic underpinnings of those activities.