

Leadership Teams and Quality Instruction Agenda

OUTCOME

Your leadership team will be prepared to advocate for quality instruction at your school.

LEARNING GOALS

Your team will:

1. Build awareness of what quality instruction means and looks like
2. Analyze how to promote quality instruction
3. Explore practices that help the team stay focused on quality instruction

AGENDA ITEMS

Launching the Module

- Launch: *LT&QI Handout 1* (5 minutes)
- View: *A History of Teaming* (15 minutes)

Learning Goal 1: How does our team define quality instruction?

- Explore: Reflecting on quality instruction, *LT&QI Handouts 2 and 3* (20 minutes)
- Apply: Searching for signs of quality instruction in our classrooms (15 minutes)

Learning Goal 2: How can our team promote quality instruction in classrooms?

- View: *Leadership Teams Pursue Powerful Instruction* (15 minutes)
- Apply: Taking stock: Our team and quality instruction, *LT&QI Handout 4* (25 minutes)

Learning Goal 3: How can our team stay on track to improve instruction?

- View: *Norms for Leadership and Learning* (10 minutes)
- Explore: Examining team practices to lead change, *LT&QI Handout 5* (10 minutes)
- View: *Meeting Students' Needs Through Leadership Teams* (15 minutes)
- Apply: Keeping our eyes on the prize of quality instruction, *LT&QI Handout 6* (20 minutes)

Now What?

- Apply: Next steps, *LT&QI Handout 7* (20 minutes)
- View: *Leadership Teams Transform a School* (10 minutes)

Personal Reflections on Quality Instruction

DIRECTIONS

Write one or two thoughts in each blank space, drawing on your beliefs about quality instruction.

What does quality instruction look like to me?	
Curricular Content (What gets taught)	
Instructional Strategies (How content is delivered)	
Assessment Practices (How learning is assessed)	
Support Structures (How students are supported)	
Additional Thoughts About Quality Instruction	

Quality Instruction in Middle Schools

Middle school leadership teams and teachers are the main audience for *Success at the Core*. This reading provides you with some background about the unique traits and learning needs of early adolescents. You will find this background to be helpful as you work to improve instruction.

What are the Key Traits of Early Adolescent Learners?

Better than anyone else, you know that the middle school years mark a turbulent developmental phase. From your work with these students, you know that they experience constant growth spurts. From ages 11 to 14, they gain physical, emotional, and intellectual strengths that help propel them through life. During these years, they reach some impressive milestones. They develop the ability to reason abstractly. Slowly, they start to see the world from perspectives other than their own. And, they begin to embrace a new awareness of the world around them. At the same time, they become keenly interested in—and able to—create hypotheses. They are ready to consider conjecture. Most are quick (as you know, often very quick) to argue a position and to question authority.

As your students explore and discover their interests at school, you will hear, “I’m bored.” This complaint is common from this age group. It signals that their environment does not offer enough variety. At this age, they are eager to try new things and test their new abilities. Most middle schoolers find social activities and technology interesting and important. They value physical tasks that challenge them and help them burn their high levels of energy. To “meet these students where they are” and reach them, you must take these unique traits into account.

What are the Elements of Quality Instruction for Early Adolescents?

With quality instruction, one size never fits all. You know that approaches must vary based on setting, student, and content area. Even so, there are some constants. Studies have found that there are four Elements of Quality Instruction in middle school. These Elements are rooted in the work of the field’s leaders. They reflect the thinking of such organizations as the National Middle School Association, the National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and national subject-area associations. The Elements also mesh with how Washington State’s Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) defines quality instruction for middle school subject areas.

- **Rigorous, relevant, and real curricular content**
Regardless of the topic, content must have a few key qualities. It must stress a deep understanding of challenging, important, and engaging material. It must also help students connect new learning with prior knowledge, their lives, and the world. When this happens, students take ownership of their learning. They see the purpose and they apply what they learn to new contexts. A “real” curriculum gives students a chance to apply content to real-world problems. It also helps them make interdisciplinary connections.
- **Active and exploratory instructional strategies**
What is the best way to deal with “I’m bored”? To reach students at this age, it is vital to use a variety of strategies. All should engage students in active ways. Some proven ways include hands-on activities, cooperative learning, discourse, and peer teaching. Strategies should also build on students’ strengths during this volatile growth period. To do so, they should foster curiosity, exploration, and creativity. They should also require students to learn by questioning, examining, and questioning again.
- **Authentic and student-centered assessment practices**
Assessment practices for early adolescents align with clear, high standards that have been communicated to students. They use a variety of formal and informal measures to monitor, provide feedback, and evaluate and report on student learning, offering students multiple opportunities and ways to demonstrate mastery. These assessment practices support students to reflect on their learning, develop meta-cognitive skills, set goals, and assess their work.

- **Support structures to help all students meet high expectations**

Structures that support early adolescents to meet high expectations ensure that all students have the opportunities, access, resources, and extra help they need to succeed in meeting clearly-communicated expectations. They include structures within the classroom that promote students' self-efficacy and confidence, structures within the curriculum that offer multiple entry points or pathways to mastery, and structures within the school day and after school to provide extra help when needed.

These four Elements of Quality Instruction form the foundation of *Success at the Core's* efforts to support leadership teams guide the work of instructional improvement at their schools.

Reflect: How does this reading define quality instruction in terms of: curricular content, instructional strategies, assessment practices, and support structures?

REFERENCES

Bransford, J., Brown, A., & Cocking, R. (Eds.); Committee on Developments in the Science of Learning, National Research Council. (1999). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.

National Middle School Association. (2003). *This we believe: Successful schools for young adolescents*. Westerville, OH: National Middle School Association.

The National Forum to Accelerate Middle-Grades Reform. (2007). *What are schools to watch?* Retrieved (2009), from <http://www.schoolstowatch.org/OurCriteria/tabid/118/Default.aspx>

Wood, C. (2007). *Yardsticks: Children in the classroom ages 4–14* (3rd ed.). Turners Falls, MA: Northeast Foundation for Children.

The Role that Leadership Teams Play in Quality Instruction

DIRECTIONS

Follow these three steps:

1. On your own, review the *Examples of Leadership Team Work that Supports Quality Instruction*.
2. With your team, brainstorm *Examples of Our Team's Work that Supports Quality Instruction*. During the brainstorm, fill in the column on your own, jotting down examples on your handout.
3. As a team, identify one Element of Quality Instruction and actions to increase your team's Instructional focus around this Element. Record the one or two actions that the team agrees to move forward at the bottom of the page.

Element of Quality Instruction	Examples of Leadership Team Work that Supports Quality Instruction	Examples of Our Team's Work that Supports Quality Instruction
Rigorous, relevant, and real <i>curricular content</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate schoolwide curriculum mapping efforts • Track teachers' efforts to use a new curriculum • Support collaboration among teachers across content areas 	
Active and exploratory <i>instructional strategies</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide professional development that builds instructional knowledge • Facilitate classroom walkthroughs • Schedule time for teachers to discuss instructional improvements based on data 	
Authentic and student-centered <i>assessment practices</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Align assessments to standards and curriculum • Gather and organize multiple sources of data for review • Support schoolwide data analysis 	
<i>Support structures</i> to help all students meet high expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocate resources to connect students with instructional expertise • Organize teachers into collaborative teams • Provide professional development on differentiation strategies 	

Actions to increase our team's instructional focus:

Practices to Guide Change

DIRECTIONS

Follow these three steps:

1. Read through the *Leadership Team Practices* on your own.
2. With a partner, discuss *Why are these five practices important for a leadership team focused on instruction?*
3. Note and discuss evidence of these practices at Mount Baker Middle School.

Leadership Team Practices Leadership teams that are able to stay focused on instruction over time have:	Evidence at Mount Baker Middle School
1. Frequent meetings: The team sets and keeps a regular and consistent meeting schedule.	
2. Internal capacity: People on the team share key roles. They all take turns being meeting planners, facilitators, note takers, and time keepers.	
3. Strategic goals: The team sets and stays focused on clear instructional goals. These goals support the schoolwide improvement plan.	
4. Targeted objectives: Each meeting's objectives advance the strategic goals. The agenda states the objectives and outlines activities to meet the objectives.	
5. Two-way communication about instruction: The team engages other teams in an ongoing dialogue about goals and progress.	

Using the Practices to Build an Agenda

DIRECTIONS

Each person on your team will review the template, and your team will discuss, *How does the template reflect the five practices?* Then, your team will use this template to either:

1. Rework an agenda from a previous meeting;
or
2. Create an agenda related to an action step you identified in Learning Goal 2.

Agenda Template

Meeting Date and Time:

Date of Last Team Meeting:

Date of Next Team Meeting:

Meeting Roles:

Agenda Planner(s):

Facilitator(s):

Recorder:

Time Keeper:

Strategic Goals: (The team's instructionally-focused goals for the quarter, trimester, or year)

Targeted Objectives: (The team's specific objectives to advance its goals)

Agenda Items: (The team's activities to achieve its objectives for the meeting)

Action Items:

- Share work from this meeting with:

Next Steps

DIRECTIONS

As a team, work through the Reflect, Commit, and Plan steps below.

Reflect

Circle the learning goal below that your team will pursue further.

1. **Your team will build awareness of what quality instruction means and looks like.**
2. **Your team will analyze how to promote quality instruction.**
3. **Your team will explore practices that help the team stay focused on quality instruction.**

Commit

Review and discuss the suggested next steps (pp. 2–3) for the learning goal your team selected to pursue. As a team, choose one next step that your team will take (from those listed or from ideas generated by the team). Record it below.

Next Step:

Plan

Identify 2–3 actions related to the next step your team identified. For each action, identify responsible team member(s) and related dates.

Action	Responsible Team Member(s)	Date(s)
1.		
2.		
3.		

Suggested next steps

1. Your team will build awareness of what quality instruction means and looks like. (Learning Goal 1)

1 Help!	2	3 We've made progress but real work remains	4	5 We've mastered it!
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Next Steps:

- ✔ **If your team assesses its status as a 3 or below, consider the following:**
 - Visit the *Quality Instruction Defined* section of the website (accessed in *About Success at the Core*) for readings and resources connected to each element
 - Explore the resources on quality instruction (accessed in the *Resources* section of the website) to increase your team's understanding
 - Visit *Success at the Core's* Teacher Development materials to learn more about elements of quality instruction, including strategies that teachers can use, classroom videos, and additional resources

- ✔ **If your team assesses its status as a 4 or 5, consider the following:**
 - Recommend *Success at the Core's* Teacher Development materials to teachers to build a schoolwide understanding of quality instruction
 - Review and share readings on the four Elements of Quality Instruction (accessed in the *Quality Instruction Defined* section of the website)

2. Your team will analyze how to promote quality instruction. (Learning Goal 2)

1 Help!	2	3 We've made progress but real work remains	4	5 We've mastered it!
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Next Steps:


- ✔ **If your team assesses its status as a 3 or below, consider the following:**
 - Review *LT&QI Handout 4* and identify more actions that leadership teams can take to support quality instruction
 - Explore this module's resources (accessed from the module's landing page) to learn more about how leadership teams affect quality instruction


- ✔ **If your team assesses its status as a 4 or 5, consider the following:**
 - Share and discuss the *Leadership Teams Pursue Powerful Instruction* video with other leadership teams at your school
 - Suggest that other leadership teams at your school fill out *LT&QI Handout 4* and meet with them to compare notes
 - Share and discuss your team's completed note taking template (from the *APPLY* activity in Learning Goal 2) with other teams and individuals at your school

**3. Your team will explore practices that help the team stay focused on quality instruction.
(Learning Goal 3)**

1	2	3	4	5
Help!		We've made progress but real work remains		We've mastered it!

Next Steps:

-  **If your team assesses its status as a 3 or below, consider the following:**
 - View again the *Norms for Leadership and Learning* and *Meeting Students' Needs Through Leadership Teams* videos and talk more about how the teams in these videos reflect the leadership team practices
 - Explore this module's resources (accessed from the module's landing page) to learn more about how leadership teams can stay focused on instruction

-  **If your team assesses its status as a 4 or 5, consider the following:**
 - Modify *LT&QI Handout 6* into an agenda template that your team can use for all of its meetings
 - Share *LT&QI Handouts 5* and *6* with other leadership teams at your school and discuss ways you might use these practices throughout the school
 - Move on to another *Success at the Core* Leadership Development module