

Curriculum Analysis – Fifth Grade ELA at Franklinville Elementary School

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Abstract

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Franklinville Central Elementary School has had exemplary reading scores in the fifth grade for the past two years. The Elementary School has achieved Annual Yearly Progress that is acceptable according to the New York State Education Department (New York State School Report Card, 2009) In June of 2010 Franklinville had the highest reading scores among the component school districts of the Cattaraugus-Allegany BOCES(Dataview, 2010). It would seem then that Franklinville Central School's Reading First (Reading First, 2009) program which began at the school in 2002-2003 has had a positive impact on these students and their reading scores. Principal Jennifer Cappelletti has been quite successful preparing Franklinville's students to read and compete well on the New York State Reading Assessments in the Fifth Grade. Franklinville has four veteran teachers who teach reading at the fifth grade level and together they have one-hundred-eight years of experience. Two of the teachers are special education certified although only one actually functions in that capacity. In addition to that Franklinville Central Elementary School teachers collaborate for thirty minutes at the end of the instructional day. One of the teachers, Diane Watkins, taught reading in third grade for twenty years then worked as a reading teacher in academic intervention services for ten years and in the last three years has taught reading in fifth grade. Demographically Franklinville Central School is situated in a very poor community and many of its students qualify for free and reduced lunches. In 2007-2008 the number of free and reduced lunches was 43% (New York State School Report Card, 2009) and the following year the number dropped slightly to 35% (New York State School Report Card, 2009). Franklinville also has a high special education population of 15.6% classified students (New York State Education Department, 2010). There were ten special

education students in Grade 5 in the 2009-2010 school year. That is approximately 10% of this year's class and represents a lower percentage of special education students than the school district's normal rate.

Franklinville Elementary principal Ms. Jennifer Cappelletti shared the proficiency trend in Franklinville's fifth grade for the past five years. The table below illustrates those students who scored at Level 3 and above in those years. The following data came from

<http://dataview.wnyric.org>

Table 1

Grade Five	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010 w/o cut off change	2010
	71.00%	67.00%	75.00%	90.00%	92.00%	62.00%

Gap Analysis taken from <http://dataview.wnyric.org> to determine which areas Franklinville Needed to improve when compared to the rest of Cattaraugus-Allegany BOCES and the rest of New York State. Examination of the data taken from the gap analysis shows that the following performance indicators need to be addressed.

Table 2 – 2008 Gap Analysis Summary

New York State Learning Standard	Performance Indicator
l Analysis and Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate information, ideas, opinions, and themes in texts by identifying a central idea and support
Information/Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify essential details for note taking Identify information that is implicit rather than stated
Literary Response & Expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define characteristics of different genres Identify literary elements, such as setting, plot, and character, of different genres
Critical Analysis & Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate information, ideas, opinions, and themes in texts

(Reading)

by identifying a central idea and support

The gap analysis was examined that compare Franklinville student achievement to schools within the Cattaraugus-Allegany BOCES and within the Western New York Anecdotal information supplied by one of the fifth grade teachers revealed that these three regular education teachers had 38, 36 and 13 years of experience. They were also working with a special education resource room teacher with 21 years experience and all of the teachers use the performance indicators taken from the New York State Standards to inform their practice. The floor of instruction is provided using the basal reader, Reading Street Grade 5 (Reading Street Grade 5, 2007). The teachers use “chapter books” to provide the students with many extra practice and experience. Two of the trade book titles are “On My Honor” (On My Honor, 1986) and “Danger in the Desert,” (Danger in the desert, 1997). Textbooks provide a basic glimpse of the core of the curriculum; they are not reliable foundations for the curriculum. (Glatthorn, p. 57) Anecdotal evidence obtained by interviewing one of the fifth grade teachers revealed a willingness to spend more time enriching students with these chapter books and also an emphasis on applying these same reading skills reading in the content area at that grade level. Increased emphasis on note taking for students and teaching skills of inference. Increased reading in the content areas will also help teachers to assist students in the evaluation of information, ideas and opinions.

Examination of the New York State Standards for Reading in Grade 5 (New York State Education Department, 2005) and evaluating Franklinville student’s results on those test clearly demonstrates that Franklinville students need to spend more time in authentic reading situations that are provided in content areas. More emphasis is needed in locating and evaluating

information and that comes from a familiarity with a variety of resources not all of which are found in the classroom and certainly not in the basal reader. The only way to correctly identify genres is to spend more time immersed in a variety of genres. Reading is a process of constructing meaning from written texts and more emphasis is needed in this area as indicated by Franklinville student performance on the New York State assessments. Every opportunity to incorporate all levels of Bloom into the curriculum needs to be emphasized. Many opportunities for student writing need to be explored too.

A combination of data and analysis provided by New York State Education Department, New York Start and Dataview which is a data analysis tool provided to Western New York School Districts by the Western New York Regional Information Center. Examination of the data revealed that Franklinville students scored well on the New York State assessments, but they fall short when they are required to evaluate information, ideas, opinions, and themes in texts and the ability to make inferences. This is an area that will require a more thoughtful reading and implementation of the New York State standards along with professional development that emphasizes the importance of these skills. Only recently has Franklinville Central been involved in a program of professional development designed to train teachers in the skills necessary to support a classroom where skills of note taking, comparing and contrasting and the general implementation of a more constructivist approach to teaching and learning. This year the school district with the leadership of Superintendent Michelle Spasiano has contracted with Silver Strong and Associates to begin a program of staff development that is both standards based and constructivist in its emphasis. Prior to this time Franklinville had no real direction other than the implementation of the Reading First Program and high stakes testing that accompanied it. Franklinville has been involved in the Reading First program since 2003 (Reading First, 2009)

and the majority of these students received high quality instruction in reading from highly qualified teachers.

It is evident from examining the gap analysis for Franklinville that this is exactly where the students need the most support. However, over three years there is evidence of improvement and this is due in part to the implementation of a curriculum director who works in conjunction with the Elementary Principal, Mrs. Cappelletti.

Examining the data provided by the gap analysis in Table 2 it is apparent that Franklinville needed to improve in the areas identified by the appropriate performance indicator. Reading passages and responding to them in multiple choice format is one part of the Fifth Grade ELA examination. A second part of the examination requires students to listen to a passage twice and to take notes and then to reflect on those notes and make answer questions that require both comprehension and the ability to make inferences.

Table 3 is taken from the New York State School Report Card for Franklinville Elementary School

Results by Student Group	2007-08 School Year			
	Total Tested	Percentage scoring at level(s):		
		2-4	3-4	4
All Students	58	100%	78%	7%
Female	33	100%	79%	12%
Male	25	100%	76%	0%

The fifth grade reading curriculum is developed locally and aligned with the New York State Standards English Language Arts Curriculum for Fifth Grade. New York State Performance indicators are used to ensure that students receive the instruction which will increase the likelihood of success on the New York State tests.

Working in conjunction the Franklinville Curriculum Director, Elementary Principal Mrs. Cappelletti and classroom teachers in the fifth grade and identifying the deficient performance indicators the Franklinville teachers adjusted their curriculum to include more emphasis on the those specific skills. Test results from the New York State ELA test for Grade 5 revealed that the adjustments made had a positive overall effect. Test scores increased over the previous year. More students were meeting the standard and more students were at level 3 and above. However the gap analysis taken from Dataview demonstrate many of the same weaknesses in skills.

Table 4 – Gap Analysis ELA Grade 5 – June 2009

New York State Learning Standard	Performance Indicator
Critical Analysis & Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate information, ideas, opinions, and themes in texts by identifying a central idea and support
Information/Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distinguish between fact and opinion • Identify essential details for note taking • Identify information that is implied rather than stated • Read to collect and interpret data, facts, and ideas from multiple sources • Recognize organizational formats to assist in comprehension of informational texts
Literature Response & Expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify literary elements, such as setting, plot, and character, of different genres
Critical Analysis & Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate information, ideas, opinions, and themes in texts by identifying a central idea and support
Information/Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe the rules of punctuation, capitalization, and spelling; use correct grammatical construction

It is evident from examining the gap analysis that Franklinville students continue to struggle with evaluating information, ideas, themes, and opinions in their reading. They continue to need additional support for note taking and in addition to those deficiencies they have difficulty distinguishing fact from opinion, and reading to collect and interpret facts from multiple sources. The teachers adjusted their teaching in line with the performance indicators however a new group of students brings with it new challenges and invites the question about how well students in the grades three and four are being prepared. Is there a discernible continuum of poor reading skills? What adjustments might need to be made to the overall language arts curriculum so that students in fifth grade might experience more success?

Table 5 – New York State School Report Card 2009

Results by Student Group	2008–09 School Year			
	Total Tested	Percentage scoring at level(s):		
		2–4	3–4	4
All Students	59	100%	90%	5%
Female	24	100%	96%	4%
Male	35	100%	86%	6%

The table above is taken from the New York State School Report Card for the year 2008-2009 and demonstrates that Franklinville Elementary students in Grade 5 continue to make acceptable yearly progress as stipulated by New York State. Although it is apparent from the gap analysis that there are still areas that can and should be addressed so that Franklinville students experience success once they leave fifth grade and move to sixth and into the middle and high school. After examining the results of the 2009 assessments fifth grade teachers at Franklinville examined their curriculum and noted the deficiencies and prepared to accept a new class of

students and targeted those performance indicators that were indicated by the gap analysis of the assessments. A gap analysis of the 2010 Fifth Grade ELA examination follows.

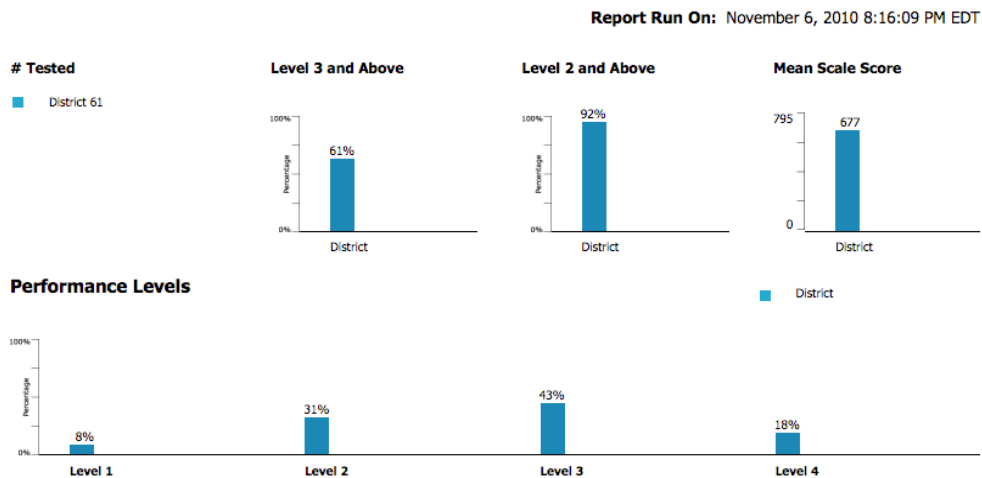
Table 6 – Gap Analysis for ELA Assessment Grade 5 June 2010

New York State Learning Standard	Performance Indicator
Critical Analysis and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate information, ideas, opinions, and themes in texts by identifying a central idea and support
Information and understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Read to collect and interpret data, facts, and ideas from multiple sources • Use text features, such as headings, captions, and titles, to understand and interpret informational
Lit Response & Expression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define characteristics of different genres • Identify literary elements, such as setting, plot, and character, of different genres

Analyzing the data in the gap analysis one is able to see that Franklinville Elementary needed to improve Franklinville fifth grade students continue to struggle in the same areas in 2008 and 2009 and that could be due to students coming to fifth grade in those years. Examination of gap analysis scores for the most 2010 cohort when that same group was in fourth grade in 2009 and it was apparent from examining the gap analysis that the 2010 cohort group performed very well in 2009 when they were in fourth grade. The 2010 scores adjusted using the previous cut off point scaled score of 650 demonstrates that this particular group of students would have scored extremely well with 92% achieving level 3 and 4 on the New York State ELA examination. This year New York State chose to raise the bar and set the cut off score (New York State Education Department, 2010) to 666 and that dropped Franklinville Elementary performance to 61.8% of students achieving level 3 and above on the New York State ELA

Assessment in fifth grade. The much lower score is reflective of this new direction from New York State Education Department. Despite the new cut score Franklinville managed to outperform the rest of Cattaraugus County on the assessment. There were ten special education students in Grade 5 in 2010 and under the old system of scoring six of the ten would have been level three and higher, but now with the higher benchmark only one special education student scored greater than 666. That means that more intervention time will be required in future years to ensure that all students will achieve at the higher level prescribed by the new Common Core Standards.

Table 7 – New York Start ELA Test Results for June 2010



The table above graphically depicts Franklinville Elementary School's performance on the Grade 5 ELA examination in June of 2010. This graphic represents the test results with the new cut off score of 666 in place.

Franklinville Elementary School is a subset of the larger school district and the school system has been plagued by ineffective leadership until the present that has largely failed to develop a cohesive vision of teaching and learning. Examining the school district's board of

education policy manual reveals only a few documents out of two-hundred-ten policies that mention the word curriculum. Of that number only one document that is dated 1997 deals specifically with curriculum and its development. It is Board of Education Policy 70.8 and it addresses the “Compact for Learning,” which predates the New York State Learning Standards which will soon be replaced by the Common Core. In addition to that Franklinville Central School has no strategic vision or mission statement. It is imperative that Franklinville Central School and therefore Franklinville Elementary School develop an action plan that focuses the educational community on measurable goals. (Carr, p. 82) Clarity is achieved when districts and schools formally identify their standards and use them consistently throughout the curriculum process. (Carr, p. 2.) Franklinville Elementary School is a school in disarray with a number of very good people pulling the school and its curriculum in a variety of directions.

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