

Continuous Learning Cycle (2008-2009)

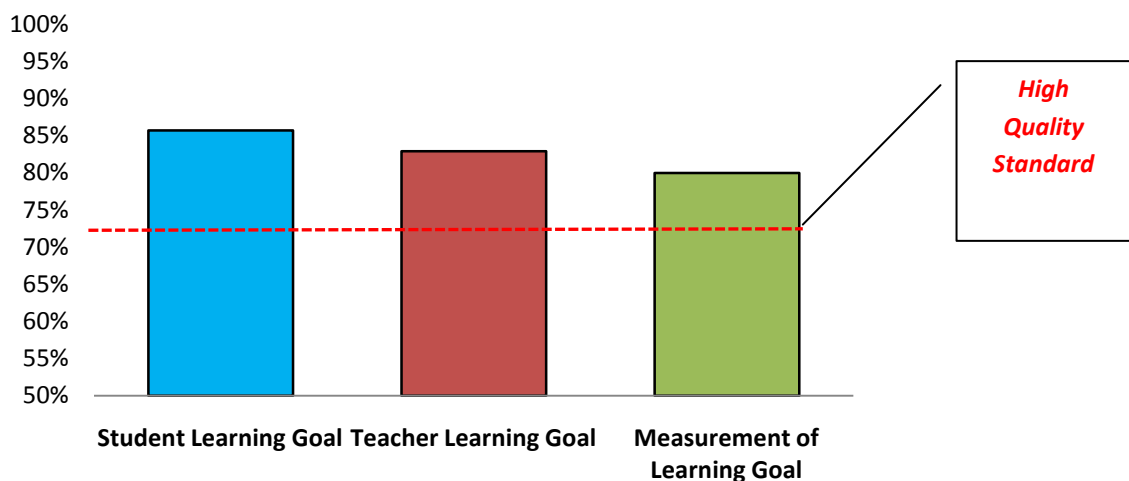
Executive Summary

The purpose of the Continuous Learning Cycle (CLC) work is to build the capacity of teachers to carry out self-directed inquiry around teaching strategies while addressing specific instructional needs of students. This was the third year of program, and each year it has been modified in response to the needs of the district and recommendations for program improvement made as a result of annual program evaluation efforts. The CLC work is aimed at developing the skills of teachers to examine and improve their own teaching practice by focusing on actual products of student work which highlight problem areas or learning needs.

The areas of difficulty for students are chosen as the subject of collaborative teacher inquiry and group lesson study, to discuss ways the instruction might be modified, to try new approaches, and to assess for changes in student mastery. Work over the past three years has been aimed at creating a process that can be formalized and duplicated for groups of teachers to use the power of teacher inquiry and data-based decision making to inform teaching practice. The use of quality criteria to define the necessary elements of the coaching cycle process makes it possible to assure that there is fidelity to the process in each of the components of: *teacher learning goals*, *student learning goals*, and *measurement of learning goals*.

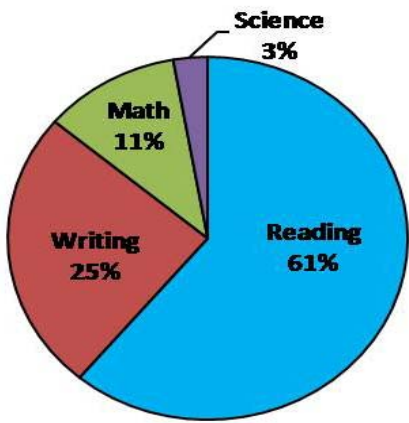
Quality of the CLC Process

By 2009, the process of developing components for coaching cycle work had been solidified and criteria for evaluating their quality were established. A rubric was developed to evaluate quality of the process components submitted as documentation for the CLC work, and the standard set for the quality of components expected was 75% or higher. CLC documents submitted in 2009 exceeded the quality standard in all component areas as illustrated in the figure below:



During school year 2008-2009, fifteen schools were identified for coaching cycle work. These schools completed a total of 36 coaching cycles which involved a total of **237** instructional personnel. These personnel included:

- 16 principals (or APs)
- 15 district field coaches
- 17 school instructional coaches
- 173 classroom teachers

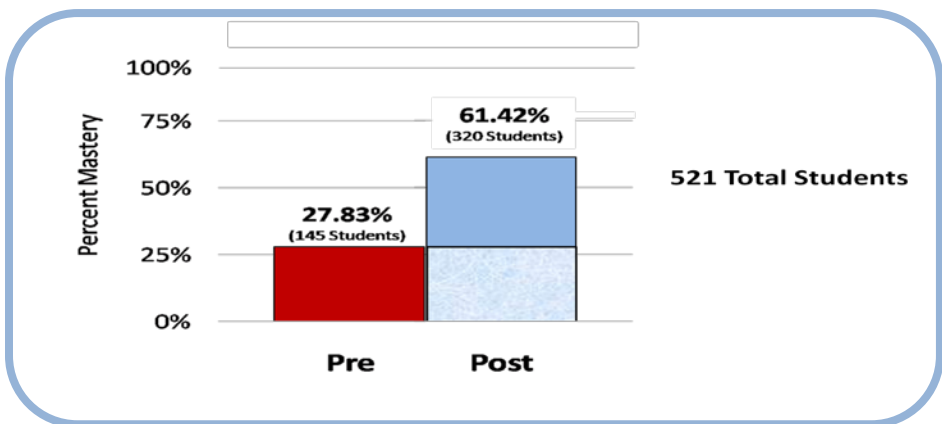


The subject matter addressed by teachers in each coaching cycle was determined by student learning needs and school improvement priorities set by school leadership teams. The topics chosen included Language Arts (Reading and Writing), Math, and Science. In 2009, the majority of participating groups focused the coaching cycle work in the subject area of Reading (61%), followed in order by Writing (25%), Math (11%), and Science (3%). This figure illustrates the proportions of coaching cycle subject matter work engaged in by groups.

What did teachers get out of the process? Teachers were asked what “unexpected outcomes” they experienced as a result of the process, and most frequent responses were comments that CLC work:

- led to observable changes in student learning (57.1%)
- led to improvement in teaching strategies and practices (42.9%)

Did student mastery of skills change as a result of the CLC work? Coaching cycles are brief, lasting from 6-8 weeks. Can the student mastery of skills improve over that period of time? From beginning (Pre) to end of the cycle (Post), **175** students reached mastery of the skills under study.



How does Continuous Learning Cycles (CLC) work lead to student achievement?

CLC work provides a process by which *group lesson study* and *professional learning community* (PLC) principles can grow and flourish. At the end of the third year for this program, **83** schools and **906** school-based instructional personnel had been engaged in one or more coaching cycles. This process of reflective teacher dialogue focused on student instructional needs works simultaneously with other school improvement processes to improve teacher practice and student learning. The diagram below illustrates how these systems are working together:

