

**Continuous Learning Cycles:
*Evaluating lesson study efforts at the elementary school level***

(2009-2010)

Executive Summary

The Elementary Continuous Learning Cycle (CLC) program began in 2006-2007 as a form of job-embedded professional learning for teachers and instructional leaders. These “cycles” were conducted on-site with teachers and others designated by principals in 8-week sessions directed by Schultz Center coaches trained in this process. The purpose of the CLC work was to fulfill a perceived need for building the capacity of teachers to *conduct self-directed inquiry around teaching strategies while addressing the specific instructional needs of students*. Following a review of best practices, the district, in partnership with the Schultz Center for Teaching and Leadership, developed a model for coaching that was supported by school and district level resources, and coaching positions.

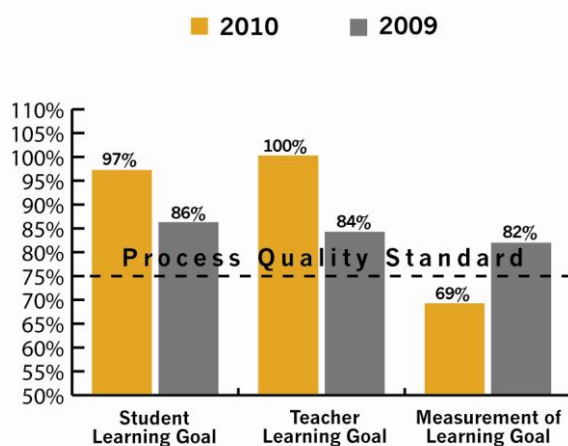
The CLC program has been evaluated three times in the course of its development to standardize and verify high levels of consistency and quality in the dialogue protocols that were followed. (See <http://www.schultzcenter.org> for other reports if you would like more information on how process quality was established.) In 2010, the program evaluation focused primarily on program outcomes including documentation of school and teacher participation in coaching cycles, and the documentation of student gains from completed coaching cycles in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies. By the conclusion of 2009-2010, **1890** instructional staff members had participated in one or more coaching cycles.

In 2008-2009, process quality and documentation of the process were areas of concentration. Process quality was established by checking for the presence of certain required elements in *Course of Study* and *End of Cycle Reports* documenting the standardized dialogue process followed by coaches. In order to assure program fidelity, a high level of process quality was established by

schools meeting or exceeding the quality standard of 75% (based on the presence of certain criteria using a scoring rubric).

In 2009, the process quality across all three areas was high with 86% of criteria met in the student learning goal, 84% in the teacher learning goal, and 82% in the measurement of learning goal. In 2010, process quality in the first two areas increased even more to 97% in the student learning goal and 100% in documenting the teacher learning goal, but dipped below the quality standard (75%) to 69% in the measurement of learning goal. Figure 1 illustrates the result from reporting process quality across all school coaching cycles completed in 2009 and 2010.

Figure 1: Quality Criteria two years.



When the impact (or benefit) of a program is dependent on a process, measuring the quality of the process is critical. The lower quality rating in 2010 in *measurement of learning* was due to the fact that fewer schools provided evidence of student gains in 2010. In 2009 student progress was reported for 577 students and, among those students, 33% moved from non-mastery to mastery of the learning targets under study in coaching

cycles. In 2010, only 277 student results were reported. A large number of those students moved from non-mastery to mastery (82%). The progress of students in coaching cycles for whom data on student performance was included was extremely good. However, we cannot make that statement for all students when process data is missing.

The lessons learned from three evaluations of the Continuous Learning Cycle (CLC) program have shown that a replicable process for conducting collaborative coaching cycles with groups of teachers has been formalized and documented. Moving forward, it is suggested that a review of results from coaching cycles conducted each year should be shared between Schultz Center staff and Duval County Academic Services staff in the form of written or oral debriefings. It has been reported by some involved in the coaching cycle work that coaches and teachers completing this work felt that there was no “audience” for their work and that having an opportunity to share findings or

recommend next steps in some meaningful way would add value to this process. Having reviewed these results annually for three years, there are recurring topic areas that are commonly reported by coaches as areas of difficulty for teachers. These include topic areas dealing with *appropriate forms of classroom assessments that serve to support and guide instructional decision making*. In addition, comments and feedback from coaches conducting CLC work in schools indicate the continuing need for professional learning opportunities for teachers in:

- teacher dialogue around *unpacking* of curriculum standards,
- expressing standards in ordered series of learning targets that contribute to desired learning outcomes for students,
- improving the ability of teachers to conduct diagnostic analyses of student work
- increasing the understanding of appropriate types of student classroom assessments to document short-term improvements, and
- providing the time and support necessary to work on creating common assessments together in teams (departmental, grade level, cross-purpose).