**13th Annual**

# Thinking & Learning Conference**s**

# DR JANELLE WILLS

## Friday 20 May

## Collaborative Teams that Transform Instruction: The next steps in PLCs

## Session 2

# MELBOURNE

# DR JANELLE WILLS

Dr Janelle Wills, PhD, is the director of Marzano Institute Australia. She is the lead training associate for High Reliability Schools, The Art and Science of Teaching and other Marzano Research topics. She works extensively with schools, regions and systems throughout Australia.

With over 30 years of teaching and leadership experience, Dr Wills maintains a strong commitment to continued learning that enables her to remain both informed and innovative in her approach. Throughout her career, she has been adept at linking theory with practice, resulting in the development of significant initiatives both within schools and at a sector level. Dr Wills firmly believes in the importance of teaching as a profession and fervently promotes the need for teachers to actively engage with research through action research and reflective practice.

Dr Wills's PhD thesis focused on self-efficacy and contributed to multiple fields of knowledge, including special education, gifted education, assessment and feedback.

## A message from Hawker Brownlow Education

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CHAPTER 5 | # Transforming Instruction

The third and fourth questions from table 1.1 on page 4 – How will we respond if our students are not learning? and How will we enrich and extend the learning for students who are already proficient? – are both instructional issues. Effective answers to both questions begin with sound planning, which can be enhanced dramatically when conducted in the context of a collaborative team.

## Planning

Collaborative teams should conduct two types of planning: (1) planning for high-quality initial instruction, and (2) planning after common assessments.

### Planning for High-Quality Initial Instruction

After teachers collaborate to decide upon the critical content to teach (essential content), levels of proficiency (proficiency scales) and the best ways to assess students' understanding (common assessments and assessments used by individual teachers, both based on proficiency scales), it is time to plan for high-quality initial instruction. This initial instructional planning is essential to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn the content well the first time. Both teachers and students benefit greatly from thoughtfully crafted initial instruction. With thoughtful planning as a backdrop, teachers often report more students obtaining proficiency more quickly. Consequently, teachers need fewer reteaching and reassessment sessions, allowing them to proceed more efficiently and effectively through their prioritised standards (guaranteed and viable curriculum). Students obviously benefit from learning more comprehensively and confidently with sound initial instruction. A very different scenario often occurs when students do not experience high-quality initial instruction. To illustrate, consider the following vignette.

COLLABORATIVE TEAMS THAT TRANSFORM SCHOOLS

*Nate is a typical student in Year 9 mathematics. During the initial round of instruction for the first unit of study of the year, his teacher does not clearly define the critical content. She hasn't discussed or planned instructional activities or resources with her colleagues and therefore teaches straight from the textbook – using only the limited processes and examples given in the text. The teacher proceeds quickly through the content, presenting a great deal of information each day. As a result, Nate makes errors in his thinking throughout this initial instruction. At this point, the teacher administers the common assessment to see how many students have obtained mastery. Nate and over half of the class fail this first assessment miserably. The consequences are dramatic: the students are frustrated at their initial failure, begin to worry that they won't catch up due to the fast pace of instruction, and start to doubt their abilities in maths and maybe even in school. Although the teacher might intend to reteach and reassess after analysing the results of this first assessment, the damage has already been done. The teacher is also frustrated, frantically trying to find time and ways to reteach and reassess over half of the class while simultaneously trying to continue with more new content during class for those students who scored proficiently. Both teachers and students become more and more frustrated, and many capable students are left behind.*

Planning for high-quality initial instruction begins with the levels of the proficiency scales. Specifically, collaborative team members can identify activities and assignments that coincide with score 2.0, 3.0 and 4.0 content on the scale. Heflebower and her colleagues (2014) provided the example in figure 5.1. In figure 5.1, two columns have been added to the proficiency scale. The first additional column contains instructional activities and assignments that can be used to reinforce and review content at score levels 2.0, 3.0 and 4.0. These are things students will be asked to engage in to help develop understanding of and skill with the content in the various score levels of a scale. The second added column contains assessment tasks at each of the three levels. This column does not represent the common assessment that the collaborative team will develop; rather, it provides direction and ideas for the types of assessments individual teachers might design and utilise in addition to the common assessment. These two extra columns can be created by collaborative teams immediately after constructing the proficiency scale itself.

At a more detailed level, collaborative team members can plan for specific lessons based on the proficiency scale. When engaged in such planning, collaborative team members should consider three types of lessons that might be used: (1) direct instruction lessons, (2) practising and deepening lessons, and (3) knowledge application lessons. Each of these types of lessons involves specific instructional strategies. These are listed in table 5.1 (page 70).

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| Score | Goal Statement | Instructional Activities and Assignments | Supplemental Assessment Tasks |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4.0 | The student independently applies place value understanding and rounding to the nearest 10 or 100 in real-world situations. | The student reads real-life examples of using rounding of whole numbers in real-world context. Through teacher-directed discussion, explicit connections are taught and noted. | The student explains how rounding whole numbers to the nearest 10 and 100 helps in figuring a family's grocery bill. The student cites other real-life examples, including explanations of how rounding whole numbers saves time and provides information. |
| 3.0 | The student will use place value understanding to round whole numbers to the nearest 10 or 100. | The student will draw three cards from a deck of cards from which the non-number cards have been removed. The student will write down those numbers on a piece of paper to form a three-digit number. They will round that three-digit number to the nearest 10 and 100. | The student will solve three-digit place value problems on a pencil-and-paper test. Sample questions include: $900 + 50 +$ _____ $= 955$ $3 +$ _____ $+ 300 = 393$ The student will solve rounding problems on a pencil-and-paper test. Sample questions include: Round 421 to the nearest hundred. Round 956 to the nearest thousand. Please add the rounded numbers from problems 3 and 4 together. The total is _____. |
| 2.0 | The student will recognise or recall specific vocabulary, such as *nearest*, *place value*, *round*, and *whole number*. The student will use place value understanding to round whole numbers below 1,000 to the nearest 10 and 100 with visual support. | The student will complete a mix-and-match vocabulary game to review key terms. The student will use visual supports such as pictures to round three-digit numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. | The student will match vocabulary terms to their correct descriptions. The student will match a three-digit number to pictures representing the number rounded to the nearest 10 and 100. |

*Source: Adapted from Heflebower et al., 2014, p. 56.*

**Figure 5.1: Proficiency scale with activities and assessment items.**

COLLABORATIVE TEAMS THAT TRANSFORM SCHOOLS

**Table 5.1: Instructional Strategies for Different Types of Lessons**

| Type of Lesson | Strategies |
|---|---|
| Direct instruction lessons | Chunking content |
| | Processing content |
| | Recording and representing content |
| Practising and deepening lessons | Structured practice sessions |
| | Examining similarities and differences |
| | Examining errors in reasoning |
| Knowledge application lessons | Engaging students in cognitively complex tasks |
| | Providing resources and guidance |
| | Generating and defending claims |
| All types of lessons | Previewing |
| | Highlighting critical information |
| | Reviewing content |
| | Revising knowledge |
| | Reflecting on learning |
| | Purposeful homework |
| | Elaborating on information |
| | Organising students to interact |

As the name implies, *direct instruction lessons* involve the teacher presenting content directly to students. Typically, the content is new material that students do not yet know and often includes facts, basic details and vocabulary. Such content is commonly found at the score 2.0 level in a proficiency scale. Direct instruction lessons might also be needed for content at the score 3.0 level, particularly if that content involves generalisations, principles or processes that require exemplification and modelling. As depicted in table 5.1, strategies associated with direct instruction include chunking content, processing content, and recording and representing content. These strategies are described in appendix D (page 143). Direct instruction lessons commonly answer the question, How will we respond if our students are not learning?

*Practising and deepening lessons* focus on helping students increase the depth of their knowledge or the fluency of their skills. As shown in table 5.1, these lessons might include structured practice sessions, comparisons, or examination of reasoning. These too are described in appendix D. Such strategies are commonly appropriate for score 3.0 content on a proficiency scale. As before, a collaborative team might determine that more practising and deepening is the appropriate response to the question, How will we respond if our students are not learning? In effect, direct instruction lessons and practising and deepening lessons are both legitimate responses when students are not learning.

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Transforming Instruction

*Knowledge application lessons* ask students to go beyond what has been taught. They usually address score 4.0 content on a proficiency scale. As shown in table 5.1, knowledge application strategies engage students in cognitively complex tasks, such as experimental inquiry, investigation, and generating and defending claims. These strategies are further explained in appendix D. Knowledge application lessons are commonly the response to the question, How will we enrich and extend the learning for students who are proficient?

In addition to the strategies associated with the three basic types of lessons, all lessons commonly involve instructional strategies that are useful regardless of the level of content being addressed. As depicted in table 5.1, these cross-cutting strategies include previewing, highlighting critical information, reviewing content, revising knowledge, reflecting on learning, purposeful homework, elaborating on information and organising students to interact. For example, a teacher could preview new content or highlight critical information in direct instruction, practising and deepening, or knowledge application lessons. These general-purpose strategies are also described in appendix D.

Determining the type of instructional strategies that might be employed in various lessons that focus on specific levels of a proficiency scale helps teachers in a collaborative team examine the relationship between content and instruction. Some strategies are appropriate for all different types of content; other strategies work best with specific types of content at specific levels of difficulty. In effect, a proficiency scale provides explicit guidance on how to answer the questions:

- How will we respond if our students are not learning?

- How will we enrich and extend the learning for students who are already proficient?

Finally, there are instructional strategies that are not focused on content per se, but are focused on establishing the appropriate context for learning. Specifically, these are strategies teachers can use to engage students, establish rules and procedures, foster good relationships with students and communicate high expectations for all. These types of strategies help students perceive the classroom as interesting, safe and orderly, nurturing and supporting, and challenging. Strategies to these ends are also described in appendix D.

Planning instructional strategies for specific lessons can and should be a major focus for collaborative teams once proficiency scales have been designed. The form in figure 5.2 (page 72) can be used to facilitate this task. To download a reproducible version of this form, visit **go.hbe.com.au**.

## Planning After Common Assessments

In addition to planning for high-quality initial instruction, a collaborative team should assemble and plan right after a common assessment has been administered, whether it is at the beginning of an instructional cycle or in the middle of it. Any time a common assessment is administered, the collaborative team analyses the assessment results to identify the most pressing needs of students. Of course, this will be different from teacher to teacher. For example, one member of a collaborative team might find that her students are most in need of instruction at the score 2.0 level, whereas another teacher within the team might find that his students are in need of instruction at the score 3.0 level. Collaborative team members could also discuss the instructional strategies that seem warranted given the identified needs of students. For example, direct instruction might be the best approach for the class that demonstrated difficulties with the score 2.0 content, whereas some type of comparison activity may be best for the class with needs at the score 3.0 level.

Additionally, planning after common assessments can be used to group and regroup students. For example, assume that three teachers within a collaborative team are analysing the results of a common assessment.

COLLABORATIVE TEAMS THAT TRANSFORM SCHOOLS

What will I do to remind students about the proficiency scale and the specific learning goals we will address today?

What type(s) of lessons will I use in today's class (direct instruction, practicing and deepening, knowledge application)?

What general instructional strategies will I use today?

How will I assess students during the class period?

- Whole-class assessment
- Individual student assessment

What activities will I use to ensure high engagement?

Are there specific students in class to whom I should pay particular attention, and what actions will I take with those students?

- Remind them of rules and procedures
- Actively establish positive relationships
- Actively communicate high expectations

*Source: Marzano & Yanoski, 2016, p. 38.*

**Figure 5.2: Form for lesson planning.**

   

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They could identify students who require instruction at the 2.0 level, those who require instruction at the 3.0 level and those who are ready for score 4.0 activities. The teachers each take responsibility for one group. One teacher takes the score 2.0 students, another takes the score 3.0 students, and the third takes the score 4.0 students. Students would return to their original classes after this specialised instruction occurred.

Figure 5.3 depicts a planning template designed for use after a common assessment. To download a reproducible version of this form, visit **go.hbe.com.au**.

| **Instructional Approaches** | |
|---|---|
| What specific instructional approaches can we utilise to assist each category of students (listed below) to progress to the next level of learning? | |
| **Significantly Below Proficiency** | |
| **On Target for Proficiency** | |
| **Already Proficient** | |
| **Assessments** | |
| How will we know our instructional approaches have worked? <br> What assessments might we employ to check for understanding? | |
| **Significantly Below Proficiency** | |
| **On Target for Proficiency** | |
| **Already Proficient** | |

**Figure 5.3: Responding to student needs planning template.**

The top part of figure 5.3 focuses on planning for each content level of a proficiency scale. The bottom half of figure 5.3 prompts collaborative teams to identify how they will collect feedback data that will tell them if the strategies they have selected are producing the desired effects.

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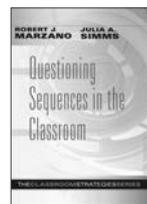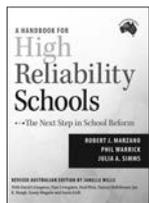**Total (plus freight) $**
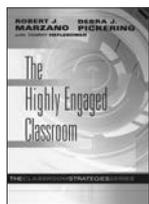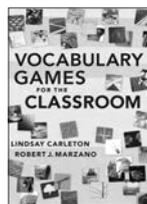
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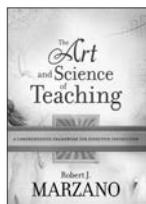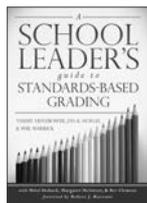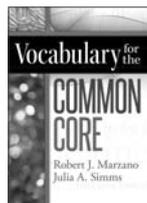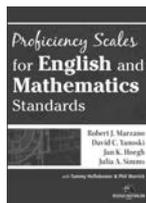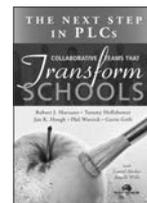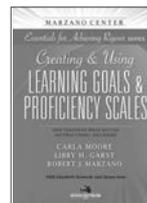
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