

Team Final Report on Teacher and Student Learning at Central Square School District

with Christine Walsh

EDU 525 - Cultivating Learning Communities through Mindful Language and Literacy

Teacher: Sarah Alsante, Cindy Edick, and Janelle Popovich

Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:

No changes to our action plan were made.

J. Popovich: I used the mindful literacy strategies with my 8th grade math classes. My goal was to get them to slow down and be mindful of what they were reading and writing. Following directions is a concern of mine. Students rush to start an assignment or an assessment without taking the time to read the directions and what is being asked of them first.

Cindy Edick: I used the mindful literacy strategies with my 6th, 7th and 8th grade L-15 Math Classes. My goal was to get the students to take time and be mindful prior to completing tasks. I found that my students are so anxious about tests, quizzes...even everyday work, that they rush through it to get the task done which results in poor grades. I combined 'Deep Breathing/Meditation' techniques with 'Reviewing Student-Friendly Targets', in addition to verbally reviewing what we had learned before the students started any work. At first, these Mindfulness Exercises were only used prior to quizzes and tests, but the results were so positive, I decided to incorporate the practice on a daily basis prior to warm-up activities.

Sarah Alsante: I used the mindful literacy strategies with my 8th grade Spanish classes. My goal was to have students become more mindful about what they were doing on each assignment and to take the time to really think about each assignment instead of just doing them to get it over with. I also wanted students to calm down and focus through mindful breathing.

Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning: We examined our reflections and found the following:

Janelle: In my 8th grade classroom I incorporated the following strategies to promote mindfulness involving literacy skills: Mindful coloring Mondays, Study Checklists before a Unit Test, and Be the Teacher Fridays.

I examined my reflections and found that as a result of mindful literacy strategies the students are beginning to slow down and focus on what is asked of them. They are getting better with putting what they want to say into words and incorporating mathematical vocabulary into their descriptions.

-At the end of the data collection process for mindful literacy strategies; I administered a student survey. The students reported their opinions and feelings about the different strategies that were implemented.

Survey Questions & Results:

66 of my students were surveyed. The choices for each statement were Agree, Neutral, or Disagree.

1. Mindful Monday coloring was an effective strategy to help me focus for class.

Approximately 67% Agreed, 24% were Neutral, and 9% Disagreed.

- The majority of the students did feel that this was a calming time and helped them focus for class.
-

Student responses: "It made me feel more relaxed and calm." "I don't feel like it helped me focus more than I usually do on any other day." "It was quiet and calmed everyone down from lunch."

2. The study checklists were helpful to me when preparing for a unit test.

Approximately 38% Agreed, 45% were Neutral, and 17% Disagreed.

Student responses: “It helped me know what I had to do and look at so I knew the information on the test.” “I would sometimes forget about it, but it helped when I didn’t.” “I don’t study.”

3. The “Be the Teacher” activity was an effective way for me to practice identifying and describing mathematical mistakes that were made.

Approximately 68% Agreed, 27% were Neutral, and 5% Disagreed.

Student responses: “I understand how to find my mistakes more often.” “It gave me skills in actually correcting papers.” “It gave me good feedback on if I understand everything or not.”

- **I’ve learned that I need to teach my students how to study for math; they really do not know how to prepare for a test.**
- **I’ve learned that I have to model and stress the importance of slowing down and reading directions all the time. Students just rush to start answering questions and don’t take the time to read the instructions.**
- **I would definitely like to continue these strategies next year starting right at the beginning of the year, and I would also like to try to incorporate mindful breathing into my classes.**

Cindy Edick: In my L-15 Math Classes, I incorporated ‘Deep Breathing/Meditation’ techniques with ‘Reviewing Student-Friendly Targets’, in addition to verbally reviewing what we had learned before the students started any work. Students had been given a quiz without any mindfulness exercises and the students scored so poorly (Average grade of 53), I decided to retest them, but this time do a mindfulness exercise prior to the quiz asking the students to visualize rules, notes and ditties that they had learned in the unit. Their average grade using the mindfulness exercise increased to an average grade of 72, an increase of 19%. I learned that the students need time to calm down, ease their anxiety and focus on the skills they need to complete their tasks.

I then continued to add this practice to our daily warm-up activity for the next unit. The task remained consistent (same skills, same number of problems, but different numbers), but the mindful practice was the controlled factor. Throughout the next 3 weeks we alternated days that we would use mindfulness exercises prior to the activity. The data showed that on days we did **not** use this practice, only 28% of the students improved skills by 24%, but on the days that mindfulness exercises were used an average of 70% of the students did better by 45%. More students improved their skills at a higher rate when the mindfulness exercises were used.

Like Janelle, I found that students do not know how to study for math or how to prepare for tests. I’ve learned that I have to model these test taking strategies in the class, to help them learn how to prepare for quizzes, in addition to relieving their anxieties.

Sarah: In my 8th grade Spanish classes I incorporated the following strategies to promote mindfulness using literacy strategies: Mindful breathing using the “stop, breathe, think” app on the ipad, What I hear you saying is, and Knee-to-knee conferences. I examined my reflections and found that as a result of mindful literacy strategies the students are beginning to slow down and focus on what is asked of them. I also notice that students are taking more time to read directions, pay attention to assignments, and really focus on the task at hand. I also notice that students are calmed down more in class and are more focused due to this less stressful environment. I think the “stop breathe and think” app using the guided meditation has really helped students to learn to tune out distractions and be more present in whatever we are doing in class.

I gave students a survey to find out what strategies were effective and to find out what they really thought of them.

Survey questions and results:

1. I enjoyed mindful breathing. 75% Strongly agree. 10 % agree and 15% said disagree.
2. Mindful breathing helped me to focus more in class. 85% strongly agree 10% agree 5% disagree.
3. Knee-to-knee conferences helped me to pay attention to what I actually wrote in my assignments. 60% Strongly agree. 15% agree. 25% disagree
4. "What I hear you saying is" helped me to actively listen more and to be a more engaged listener and learner. 90% strongly agree . 10% agree. 0% disagree.

These results helped me to see that most students enjoyed taking the time to slow down and focus on mindfulness and breathing and that it really does help them focus. It also helped me to slow down and really be present.

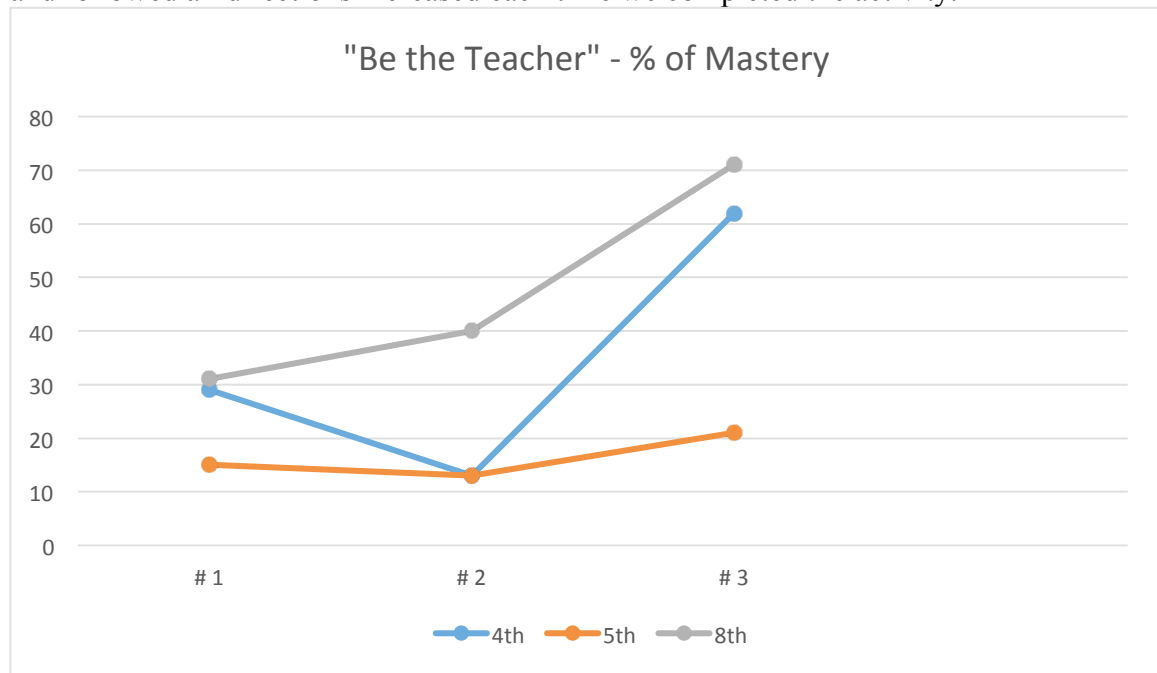
I also learned that I need to continue teaching skills to learn how to be active/engaged learners and not to be tuned out for a whole class thinking about outside distractions.

Analysis of Data on Student Learning: We examined _____ and found the following

Janelle:

➤ **Students slowing down to read and follow directions.**

- My reflections from the Be the Teacher activity show that the more we did the activity; the more students were more mindful of reading and following directions to answer all parts of the question.
- The following visual shows how the percentage of my students that mastered the concepts and followed all directions increased each time we completed the activity.



- However, this mindfulness didn't carry over to everything. On Quizzes I always put an extra credit opportunity within the directions. It doesn't involve any math; students just have to read the directions to find out how to get five bonus points. I gave my students a Quiz on March 8th and only 39/86 students received the five bonus points on their quiz. This is troubling! I have been doing this the entire year, and still only a fraction of students are slowing down and reading the directions at the top of a quiz! I need to continue modeling, reminding, and trying new strategies to help my students see the necessity in reading and following directions all the time.

An example of the extra credit on quizzes:

Directions: Read each question carefully. Circle the correct answer to each question. On page 3, for extra credit, tell me what you want to do for a living as an adult. Record your answers to questions 1-10 on the answer sheet on page 3.

Student assessment scores.

- I compared Student test scores from September (before strategies were in place) to test scores in February (after strategies had been implemented): 46 students out of my 85 had higher or equal test scores from their first test in September (54% improved). It is hard to compare content, but it does show that the strategies that were in place helped more than half of them better prepare for the latest unit exam than they were for the first unit exam.

Cindy Edick:

At the end of the Integer Unit, the same practices (combined 'Deep Breathing/Meditation' techniques with 'Reviewing Student-Friendly Targets', in addition to verbally reviewing skills) were used prior to the unit test. In, addition, a student survey was given:

- 73% of the students found Mindfulness exercises to be helpful.
- 91% stated that is helped remind them of specific integer rules (which is the unit we were studying) that they had forgotten, 73% were able to identify specific rules.
- 82% of the students said they would like to do this prior to other future tests.

At the beginning of the school year, the students were asked 4 simple yes/no questions in a survey:

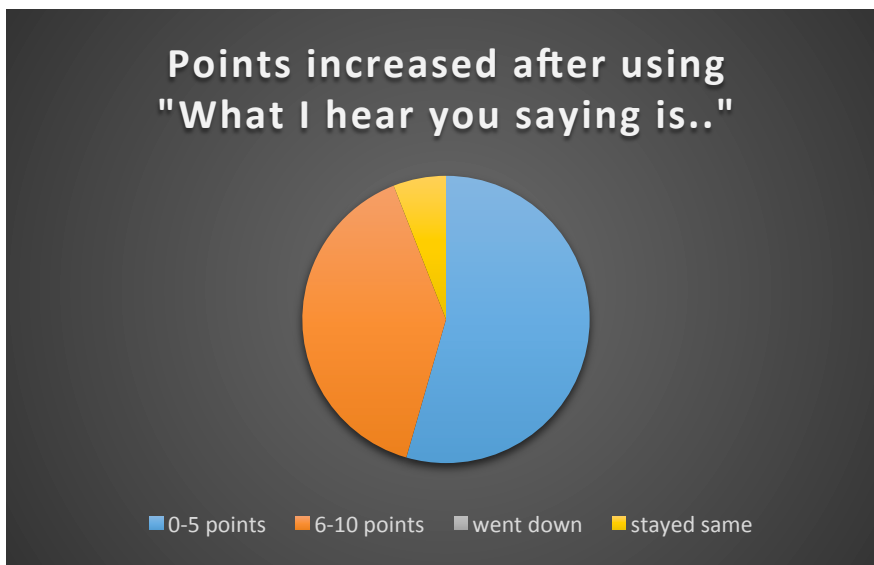
1. Have you ever heard of mindfulness?
2. Are you ever distracted by students in class?
3. Do other in school factors affect your learning in the classroom?
4. Do things outside of school ever affect your learning in class?

In my classes, no one (0%) knew what mindfulness was, but everyone (100%) said they were easily distracted and were affected by inside and outside factors in their everyday life. Today, all of my students (100%) have heard of mindfulness, 73% of my students find Mindfulness exercises helpful, 82% like doing exercises prior to tests, 27% could name specific mindfulness techniques that they prefer and 91% could express what they would include if they were leading the exercises.

Sarah: Students trying strategies to become better listeners and be more mindful of what they are listening to and not being as distracted.

- My reflections from the "what I hear you saying is" activity show that students took the time to listen to what they are hearing instead of just answering with the first thing that comes to mind. This activity required students to actively listen and go back and give the questions.

- The following visual shows how the percentage of my students that did better on the “what I hear you saying is” activity increased after we used this strategy. I tried the listening activity once without the strategy and once with it and students did much better the second time after having to actually pay attention.



Teacher(s)/School: Aimee Burns, Lori Munnich, Tami Hebblethewaite, Jaclyn Straub

Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:

Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning: We examined our reflections and found the following:

Through the implementation of the Nurtured Heart Approach, we have all been reminded of the benefits of positive praise and motivation, as compared to negative reprimands and consequences. We find ourselves striving to be more positive in all areas of our lives, not just in the classroom, as we have internalized the ideals and beliefs of this program. When we make it a point to find greatness in each student, we see their body language, focus, and personal choices change for the better.

While we have found some initial success (decreased number of reprimands and minutes lost from instruction to correct unwanted behaviors, more time on task for our students who struggle with inattention, etc.) we understand that implementing this program properly will require time as it is a complete shift from what we have been practicing for years. We are slowly realizing by being consistent with the program, we are gaining valuable instructional minutes back from our most hard to reach students, and these positive gains are being seen in our progress monitoring numbers. We are all looking forward to applying what we have learned so far to our new classes in September, as we think that starting with this approach from day one will make a big differences in how the students react and exchange energy with us.

Our building has also made the Nurtured Heart Approach a priority. Right now, we are in the initial learning stages and we have a book club that meets monthly to discuss what we have learned and tried in our classrooms. In the future, we hope to establish a peer observation system where we can visit each other's classrooms and learn from one another. We have already implemented something like this regarding our use of learning targets and we were all amazed with how positive the experience was. We

also have the support of our building psychologist and administrator, which has been a huge help.

Analysis of Data on Student Learning: We examined _____ and found the following:

Our main focus with implementing the Nurtured Heart approach was to decrease the amount of instructional time being lost correcting negative behaviors and redirecting inattentive students. We implemented this approach across a variety of settings (whole group and small group) and grade levels (K, 2nd, and 4th). Our school psychologist and school psychologist intern collected data numerous times regarding our fidelity to the approach and what they noticed happening in our classrooms. In all settings, we noticed our students were more on-task and disruptive behaviors have decreased. We are also noticing our students are becoming more self-aware of when they are off-task and they are becoming better at returning themselves to instruction. The teachers that are using the reset strategy have noticed that, at times, students are choosing to send themselves into reset and quickly coming back to the instruction when they are ready. They no longer view this as a negative consequence, but rather an opportunity to start again with a clean slate.

Teacher(s)/School: Kim Davis, Autumn Sutton, Margie Saunders

Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:

Kim- I modified my action plan to self-evaluate effort using an “Effort Tracker” evaluating system instead of focusing on letters and sounds.

Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning: We examined our reflections and found the following:

Margie-This course really helped me to make the connection between deeper student learning and mindfully planning literacy activities. I coordinated the Anthology domains to be a hands on literacy experience. This took time to plan materials, grouping and centers. In reflection I learned that the students were enthusiastic about demonstrating their learning while creating something that could be viewed by others. I planned a farm book, videos on kings and queens day, and had the students illustrate what they had learned each day of the Native American unit. For data I used smiley face and frown face format the students were familiar with. The percentage of students who circled the smiley face made me realize that the students benefitted from the mindful breathing. The mindful literacy activities our class created held value in the students’ eyes.

Kim- This course helped me make the connection that even at 4 and 5 years old children can benefit from Mindfulness breathing and are able to use a simple scale to evaluate their effort. I was surprised to learn that many of them looked forward to some kind of breathing daily and would start asking to do it. They particularly liked the ones on Go-Noodle, “Rainbow Breath” and “Let it Go”.

I used the “Effort Tracker” tool with the students as well. I found that in the beginning the students almost always said they were trying their best. After noticing this, we made a “What good coloring looks like” chart. They redid the activity and then they compared their own papers. They were able to tell when my paper was scribbled or messy and when it was “good” effort. They quickly realized they could do this with their own papers.

Autumn- This course helped me to find a way to raise the awareness of 8 year olds. By teaching mindfulness to them, they are able to put forth more effort and stay engaged and motivated through a longer period of time. The use of breathing techniques to refocus our attention back to the task at hand has recreated the literacy instruction in my room and has breathed new life into. Students are excited to learn and know how to deal with emotions and frustrations that come up along the way. By doing the hot cocoa breathing at the beginning of centers, students are able to focus on the tasks at hand and clear their mind of any outside influences. During centers, if they feel they are having a hard time focusing, they will complete a 3 in 4 out breath or an ocean breath to refocus themselves. This has allowed them to continue putting forth great effort while working to complete tasks. I do not need to pause from my guided reading groups to correct or redirect inappropriate behaviors.

Analysis of Data on Student Learning: We examined _____ and found the following:

Margie- I found that the students were using academic vocabulary when combined with literacy activities. Each student was able to collaborate on a project that was focused on an anthology unit. My examples of this are a class book about farms. Students took pictures of farm based toys and then told me what they were showing and I typed in the caption. (See example Mrs. Saunders Class Farm Book) We also recreate the stories we learned in the King and Queens Anthology unit in videos. (I cannot share this due to privacy of the students). I found that they were eager to retell the poem Old King Cole, or the fairy tale of King Midas when they were acting it out versus chanting it repetitively. For data I used smiley face and frown face format the students were familiar with. The students' responses were 94% students enjoyed hands on literacy activity tied to the domains. More students preferred making the farm book as compared to the video. I also surveyed the students on the benefits of doing mindful breathing in our classroom 88% felt it was helpful when they were upset, and the same 88% preferred doing the gonoodle.com guided calm breathing exercises versus just closing our eyes and focusing on breathing.

Kim

The students really started to understand how/when they could use this breathing to help them. I would have them do this before a story, before coloring/writing, and anytime I needed them to "regroup" and calm down. One of the things I noticed was that the students were able to breathe in, but struggled to hold it for a few seconds. I learned that doing a straw/cereal sucking game seemed to help them get the idea. They really liked this "game" and asked to do it often.

The students were able to tell when my paper was scribbled or messy and when it was "good" effort. They quickly realized they could do this with their own papers and started to use a more honest and thoughtful approach. The students often use the words at times that we are not using the "effort trackers". They often say things like "I am trying my best, or I have no white spaces on my coloring".

Autumn

At the start of this course only 29% of my class was completing all the center activities given, while 52% were only completing half. Of the work done, students assessed their effort at a 6/12. Currently, 66% of my room is completing all centers given and only 10% are only completing half. The students' average self-assessment on the quality of their work is a 10/12. This has also carried over to the STAR assessments and students are using breathing techniques before and during the assessment to refocus and calm their mind. They are also focusing on taking their time and giving their best effort. This is reflective on the score cards used to track their progress, as the class average is now 3/4.

Teacher: Christine Santimaw

Presentation Link

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b-8sCiQDbkA>

Teacher Participant Names: Lorraine Malecki, Christa Tolbert and Linda Meredith

Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:

Limited work was completed with the pre-service students due to lack of students available for tutoring.

We were happy to present our findings with Dr. Chris Walsh, and Nichole Brown at the Professional Development Schools Conference to highlight the collaboration between the university and our school district.

Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning: We examined our reflections and found the following: (Support each claim with examples/evidence)

Teachers found all strategies to be effective or highly effective with a satisfaction rating from 56 – 93% and modified them to suit their individual needs. In-service teachers completed a reflection journal and participated in faculty presentations. Pre-service teachers shared their experiences in a weekly journal regarding their success in their practicum experience and with their high school students.

	very effective	effective	somewhat effective	not effective	n/a
VKR (Vocabulary Knowledge Rating)	26.67% 4	40.00% 6	20.00% 3	0.00% 0	13.33% 2
MVP (Most Valuable Point)	21.43% 3	35.71% 5	14.29% 2	0.00% 0	28.57% 4
Task Rotation	40.00% 6	40.00% 6	6.67% 1	0.00% 0	13.33% 2
4-2-1	20.00% 3	60.00% 9	6.67% 1	0.00% 0	13.33% 2
Memory Box	53.33% 8	33.33% 5	13.33% 2	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
3-2-1	33.33% 5	60.00% 9	6.67% 1	0.00% 0	0.00% 0
Questioning in Style	26.67% 4	46.67% 7	13.33% 2	0.00% 0	13.33% 2

Analysis of Data on Student Learning: We examined 15 primary classrooms and asked the teachers to describe qualitatively the effect of using the strategies from the Tools for Thoughtful Assessment book by Harvey Silver. The two questions were: 1) What worked well? 2) How did it impact student learning? Through the narrative accounts from the teachers we created a wordle to exemplify the number of times that they documented specific effective elements. Overall teachers found an increase in student engagement, collaboration and the quality of work completed.



Teacher Participant Names: Amber Rehm

Changes Made to My Action Plan:

In my original action plan I intended on researching and implementing both mindfulness and study strategies. In my actual project I chose to focus more on study strategies. I took this course last year and mindfulness was really the primary focus of my project. This year I felt like I really wanted to focus on how to best help students learn how to study. While I did utilize some mindful strategies with my class this year, I did not make that the focus of my project. Instead I asked students to be more mindful about how they study and what strategies were the most effective for their learning. As the teacher, I was also more mindful about teaching students study strategies and looking at assessment data to determine how effective each strategy was.

Analysis of Data on Student Learning: We examined _____ and found the following: (Give examples/evidence for each claim).

Over the course of the year I introduced students to **five** different study strategies:

- 1. Countdown Review:** Students independently create
 - **5** review questions with answers
 - **4** important vocabulary words with definitions
 - **3** important people and why they are significant
 - **2** topics that you think will be on the quiz
 - **1** graphic organizer

2. Q & A (Question and Answer)

- Students work in small groups to create 3-5 questions about an assigned topic from the unit of study.
- Questions are placed on one index card and answers on another.
- Students rotate sets of cards and answer the questions.
- Once completed, they then check their answers with the answers in an envelope.

3. Memory Boxes

- Students review by drawing a box for each topic and filling it with everything they can remember about a given topic.
- Boxes can be used to study for the quiz and visualize during the quiz.

4. Quizlet

- Quizlet is a free website that provides learning tools for students, including flashcards, study and game modes.
- Students can create their own set of study cards or teachers can create a set and send the link to students.

5. Unit Study Guide

- Students are given a unit study guide created by the teacher that has essential questions and important vocabulary from the unit of study.
- Students are encouraged to go through the study guide to figure out what they need to review and create flashcards.

Results using Student Perception: Students were asked to rate each of the 5 review strategies 1-5 (1 being the least effective and 5 being the most effective) See results below.

Review Strategy	Average Class Rating (1-5)
Countdown Review	2.47
Review Q & A	3.14
Memory Boxes	2.43
Quizlet	4.16
Unit Study Guide	3.78

Results using Assessment Scores: Quizzes and exams were given after each of the review strategies and class averages for assessments were calculated. See results below.

Review Strategy	Class Average on Assessments
Countdown Review	79%
Review Q & A	66%
Memory Boxes	79%
Quizlet	82%
Unit Study Guide	75%

Utilizing both the students' perception and assessment results the **Quizlet Study Strategy** was the most effective in helping students to prepare for their assessment.

Two Specific Case Studies: Student A and Student B

- **Student A:** Went from a 50% average on unit exams in the fall semester to an 82% in the spring.
- **Student B:** Went from a 40% average on unit exams in the fall semester to a 75% in the spring.

Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning: We examined our reflections and found the following: (Support each claim with examples/evidence)

Based on the results of my project I decided to introduce students to Quizlet at the beginning of the school year. This summer I am going to work on putting together Quizlet assignments for each unit so that students can have access to the necessary vocabulary at the start of the unit. This will also allow students to go through the assignment as needed. I will also bring students to the computer lab at the end of the unit to be sure that every student has access to the assignment at least once. I will also ask students to create their own Quizlet assignments using class notes and important terms. My hope is that they will begin to see the value in this strategy so that they can utilize it with other courses and in the future. I also plan on using Quizlet in conjunction with vocabulary openers from New Visions Social Studies Curriculum Project and CODE vocabulary strategies that I have begun to implement this year.

Teacher Participant Names: Cara Young, Megan Rothrock

Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:

Our original goal was to choose strategies from the “Tools for Thoughtful Assessment” text that would develop our students’ abilities in the areas of literacy and reading comprehension. Although we did try a variety of strategies in both of our classrooms, we realized that we wanted our focus to become having the students be mindful of their assessment preparation. Our goal in the end became making our students set goals for themselves for a future assessment or unit, make a plan as to how they were going to reach that goal, and implement their suggestions in the classroom for how we could help them achieve that goal. Periodically throughout the unit, we reminded them of the things they said they would do to achieve a higher grade on the next exam.

Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning: We examined our reflections and found the following:

The different types of test assessment evaluations from the “Tools for Thoughtful Assessment” were easy to adjust to fit our content, and were useful for data tracking. It required that the students set goals and make periodic checks on their individual goals to hold them accountable and more mindful as they prepared for assessments. In the future, we would begin doing these test evaluations starting in September as it would be beneficial to have an entire year of data.

The process of discussing which parts of the exam students needed more practice with (speaking, listening, reading, writing, vocab, grammar) while doing assessment evaluations influenced lesson planning in a positive way. Additionally, having students make suggestions for classroom activities gave them ownership in their learning.

Analysis of Data on Student Learning: We examined _____ and found the following

After reviewing our reflections and our evidence from Test A to Test B, we noticed that many students were motivated by setting goals for themselves and being reminded of those goals. From Test A to Test B, $\frac{3}{4}$ of our classes increased their test averages, and one class remained the same. Over half of our students reflected that setting goals and creating a plan did, in fact, make them feel motivated to beat their score. Many of the others reported that they already feel motivated to do their best each time, and that the test evaluations may not have affected their score.

Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:

-None

Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning: We examined our reflections and found the following:

- As a teacher, I need to take more initiative to model and reinforce good study habits. I'd like to be more mindful in making sure students' needs are being addressed
 - Next year, I'd like to implement more class time (10 minutes) at the end of class, as an exit strategy, to have students create a study method for that day's lesson. Or, have students review/reflect on what they learned and create something that could be studied in the long-run
- I need to come up with more college-level strategies to help students prepare for studying by creating efficient and useful reading notes. Also, I need to teach better strategies to help them narrow down their extensive reading notes

Analysis of Data on Student Learning: We examined _____ and found the following:

Students were more aware of available study methods and have been instrumental in creating them

Data-Amanda Petrie "Study Methods"

Group: 9H Pre-AP World History

of Students: 24

of Students that Reported:

15 Minutes of Studying: 20

30 Minutes of Studying: 2

1 hr of Studying: 0

More than 1 hr: 0

*Of the 20 students that studied, 15 reported that they felt the studying directly correlated to a feeling of confidence on the quiz

*1 student that did not study said they felt confident on the quiz

Methods of Studying: I surveyed students about their study habits for quiz and these were some of their responses:

"I went back and looked at the questions on the side and then looked at my Cornell Notes"

"I came up with our own questions and quizzed each other [partners]"

"I went back in the textbook and skimmed it to find important parts of the chapter"

"I looked back at questions Mrs. Petrie asked on Reading Check Quizzes"

Students demonstrated a more positive attitude towards good study habits

Question asked to students in April: *WHY* study?

- "I want to feel confident on my exam"
- "I think it makes me remember things longer"
- "I think it increases my grade"