

Assumption St. Bridget School

Improving Teacher Equity: Highly Capable Students

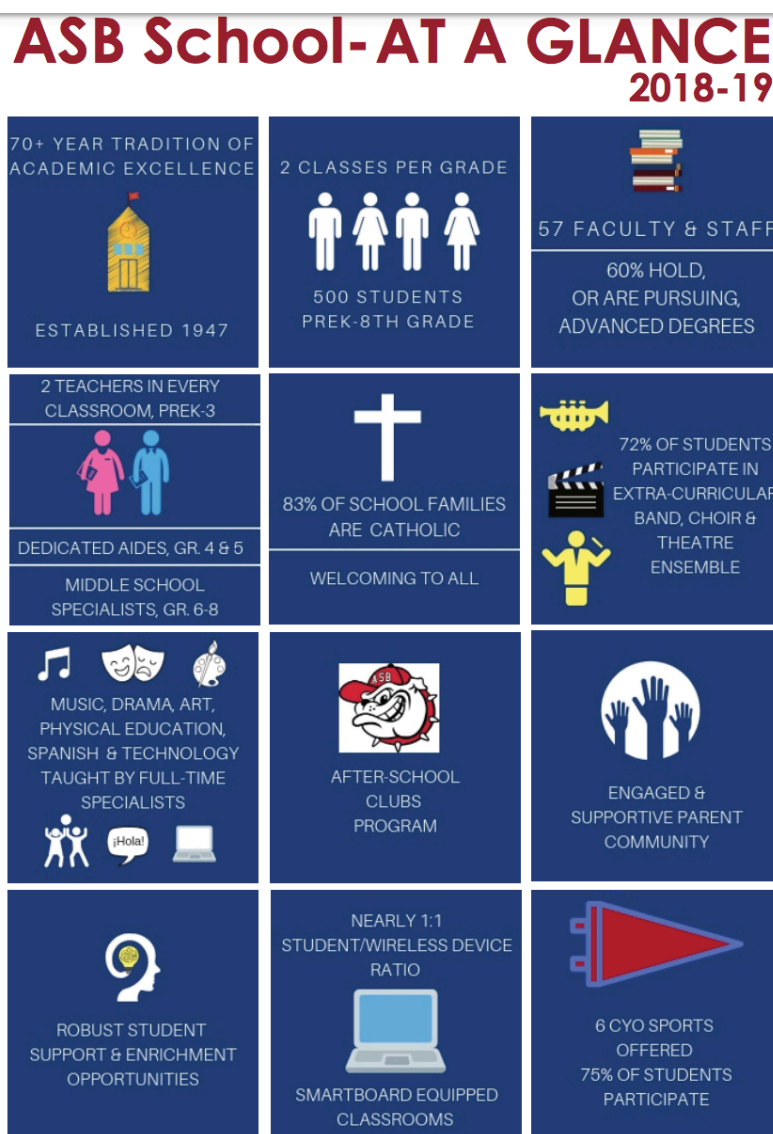
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Part 1: Rationale

Context:

Assumption St. Bridget (ASB) school is a PreK-8th grade school located in the Wedgwood neighborhood of Northeast Seattle. Established in 1947, ASB is a leading school in the Archdiocese of Seattle. ASB offers a numerous amount of programs for its diverse learning community. Currently the school offers before and after school programs such as band, choir, drama, art, and countless sports programs. Similarly, through parent sponsored clubs, students participate in chess, robotics, Spanish, hip hop dance, and many other activities. During the school day students in need have access to a reading specialist offering pull out instruction for reading support. Similarly, the school employs a math coach. This provides teachers and students an extra resource for math instruction.



Through parent surveys, teacher surveys, and MAP data, an area in need of addressing is that of highly capable (HiCap) students. As stated in the school's strategic plan, one of the many goals over the coming years is to "Enhance and expand the provision of differentiated learning for highly-capable students".

The following tables represent the breakdown of the 2017-2018 MAP scores by subject area. Important note: the available data set for each subject area is not constant. This is a rough average based on the information available. This data spans second through eighth grade.

Table 1. “Language Use” - Total number of student test scores available = 317

	Lo %ile < 21	LoAvg %ile 21-40	Avg %ile 41-60	HiAvg %ile 61-80	Hi %ile > 80
Student Count	9	13	41	194	150
% of Student Body	2.8%	4.1%	12.9%	32.8%	47.3%

Table 2. “Reading” - Total number of student test scores available = 270

	Lo %ile < 21	LoAvg %ile 21-40	Avg %ile 41-60	HiAvg %ile 61-80	Hi %ile > 80
Student Count	13	20	40	89	108
% of Student Body	4.8%	7.4%	14.8%	32.9%	40%

Table 3. “Mathematics” - Total number of student test scores available = 374

	Lo %ile < 21	LoAvg %ile 21-40	Avg %ile 41-60	HiAvg %ile 61-80	Hi %ile > 80
Student Count	11	33	73	127	130
% of Student Body	2.9%	8.8%	19.5%	33.9%	34.7%

A majority of the student body falls into the higher end of the scoring scale. This data shows the school's strength in Math and ELA, further showcasing the need for the faculty to gain skills and awareness related to HiCap students. Something we cannot conclude from this data is which students fall into the 90th and 95th percentile. This would allow for easier identification of which students are the outliers in need of addressing.

Why focus on highly capable?

Highly capable students require an equal amount of support as do any of the other students. A misconception surrounding highly capable students is they are entirely self sufficient and “get it”.

The needs of highly capable students might differ from the rest of the student population, however these needs are valid and must be addressed to ensure their success. As mentioned by Austina De Bonte (N.D) in the article *Peeling the Onion: Equity in High Cap*, “HiCap programs are a vital ‘whole child’ intervention for vulnerable students who would likely not be successful with a conventional approach” (p. 1). Schools strive for equal access to learning for all students, however HiCap students are often neglected as teachers might view these students as having “made it”. As De Bonte eloquently states:

“The root cause is that we imagine HiCap kids to have it made - to be star students with bright futures. Until we see this population for what it really is - a vulnerable special needs population that needs specialized support for reliably good outcomes, which we need to proactively identify and serve in EVERY demographic group, which all requires substantial funding to accomplish - we will continue to have equity problems” (p. 23).

Intended Outcomes:

Over the next academic year, the following professional development plan will aim to provide teachers opportunities to read, research, implement, and reflect on teaching strategies around HiCap students. If implemented effectively, teachers will acquire practical skills and confidence in their ability to successfully support the learning needs of HiCap students. It is important to note, the goal of this PD is not on a *singular* teaching strategy. The reasoning for this is the diverse needs of HighCap students. One strategy will not work for the entire students body. However the staff will discuss important points with one another, form hypothesis’, conduct research, and reflect on the outcomes. Within this model of learning the staff will discover the details needed to support HiCap students. Ideally, after the year of PD has concluded, the school will have an array of services, tactics, and teaching strategies for high cap students. Through this PD, teachers will gain yet another tool for their ever expanding tool belt. As Kathryn Picanco (2014) states in her article *Supporting the Needs of Highly Capable Learners: Developing a Continuum of Service*, “A thoughtfully and intentionally designed portfolio of services will lead to opportunities for accelerated and enhanced learning opportunities for students throughout their education (p. 39).

Part 2: Plan / Overview

Through this professional development plan, the teaching staff will engage in two primary tasks. 1) Teachers will read and discuss a book regarding HiCap students and their diverse needs. This book is undecided. 2) Teachers will work in teams to conduct a lesson study.

Book Study:

Book study groups allow teachers to collectively discuss larger ideas in a group environment. As defined by Zepeda (2012), “Book studies support smaller groups of teachers to meet at a regularly scheduled time to engage in discussions, reflect on what has been read, and then envision how a new practice might be implemented once back in the classroom” (p. 191). When implemented correctly, book study establishes a launching pad for in depth discussions around a certain topic or idea. Book study groups “paint in broad strokes” and allow for the group to use the text as a jumping off point. As stated by Burbank and Kauchak (2010) “the opportunity to dialogue using the semi structured formats affiliated with the book clubs allowed for reflection in ways that moved beyond superficial reviews of text” (p. 69). Teachers are encouraged to read the text and form their own conclusions. This valuable discourse peels back the layers of a given topic in unique and personal ways. Establishing book study at the beginning of this PD plan builds a firm foundation on the details around HiCap students. Likewise, book study establishes a collaborative and supportive environment between peers. This environment is crucial for the success of the next step, lesson study.

Lesson Study:

As described by the Lesson Study Research Group (LSRG, n.d), “lesson study is a professional development process that Japanese teachers engage in to systematically examine and practice, with goal of becoming more effective” (p. 1). This process of adult learning provides teachers a framework to ask critical questions, test hypothesis, and form conclusions regarding an aspect of teaching. In more direct terms the Australian Institute of Teaching School Leadership (N.D) defines lesson study as “a process for teachers to examine their practice in order to improve their impact on student learning”. A summary of the lesson process, stated by Catherine Lewis, Rebecca Perry, and Aki Murata (2006, p. 226) is as follows:

1. *Study curriculum and formulate goals*
2. *Plan*
3. *Conduct research*
4. *Reflect*

In the simplest terms, teachers will work in groups to establish their own hypothesis regarding HiCap students, plan a research strategy, teach lessons, gather data, and finally reflect on what the data reveals regarding their initial hypothesis.

A key element found in the lesson study process is the collaborative and supportive nature between peers. This PD plan relies on teachers being observed, receiving feedback, and engaging

with each other on how to improve their practice. This provides the benefit of teachers effectively studying each other to receive ideas and inspiration for their own classrooms. Another benefit of this model of PD, mentioned by Brian Doig and Susie Groves (2011) is:

Research lessons are not about perfecting one lesson, but rather focus on developing teachers' ideas and experiences of different approaches to teaching. Research lessons make participants and observers think quite profoundly about specific and general aspects of teaching. (p. 86)

Lesson study focuses on student learning, not teacher performance. As Raymond Bjuland and Reidar Mosvold (2015) state "Since lessons are planned in order to make pupil learning visible, all participants in the lesson study group fixate their attention on observing pupil learning" (p. 7). This is a crucial aspect of the lesson study process. The focus and evaluation is placed upon the student's and their performance. The observing teachers in the lesson study are simply evaluating the progress of the students. This establishes a clarity of purpose and detaches from emotional feelings toward particular teaching strategies. Simply put, did the students display growth? Did the strategy used positively impact the students?

At the end of the school year teachers will reflect on their data and initial hypothesis. During the final lesson study meetings, teachers will share conclusions they drew from their experience, including any relevant data. Data might include MAP score comparison, tests, quizzes, or any observational notes regarding HiCap students and their performance over the past six months. Finally teachers will hold discussions centered around possible next steps. Following this, teachers will complete a feedback form regarding the lesson study process as a whole. The administration team will take this feedback and adjust the process for the upcoming year.

Part 3. Timeline

Date	Action Item	Resources Needed
June 2019-Sept. 2019	Teachers read a book (prior to in-service) aimed at working with highly capable students and their learning needs. During in-service teachers engage in discussions and activities around the ideas presented in the book	Teachers to lead planning of in-service activities Book Administrative support for attending conference

	Team attends the “Differentiated Instruction” Conference in Las Vegas	
Sept. 2019	<p>Teachers work together in grade levels to analyze the previous years MAP data to identify which students could be identified as highly capable.</p> <p>If MAP data is not compelling enough or the evidence is not clear, then teachers will use informal discussions, previous test scores, quizzes, projects, and ALMA grades as a basis for choosing focus students.</p> <p>Each grade will communicate with the previous grade level and discuss the students identified as a highly capable, strategies used in previous years, and challenges those students faced.</p> <p>Team shares insights on information gathered at the “Differentiated Instruction” Conference</p>	MAP data from previous year
Oct. 2019	<p>Teachers form lesson study groups and establish norms/expectations</p> <p>Teachers identify subject area of focus, which students they are focusing on, and a hypothesis question for testing.</p> <p>In an “all staff” faculty meeting, teachers pair share with someone not in their lesson study group, “what is your hypothesis?” and “what data will you collect?”</p> <p>Administration seeks individual teachers to present at</p>	<p>Lesson study meeting log</p> <p>Document for identify each teacher’s focus subject and their</p>

	upcoming “all staff” meeting regarding data collection and becoming a researcher in the classroom.	
Nov. 2019	<p>Teacher led faculty meetings to discuss how to become a “researcher in the classroom”.</p> <p>Topics of discussion pertain to data collection and best research practices. Teachers must feel confident in their ability to collect data effectively and honestly.</p> <p>Teachers schedule their observation times and note who is covering their teaching time.</p>	<p>Survey of research preparedness.</p> <p>Calendar in workroom notating when lessons are being observed.</p>
Nov. 2019 - April 2020	<p>Teachers engage in multiple lesson study sessions, each with a different grade level leading the meeting.</p> <p>Teachers work together to schedule times in which other teachers can observe their lessons.</p> <p>Data is collected and discussed at meetings.</p>	<p>Meeting notes</p> <p>Teacher feedback form (January)</p>
May 2019	<p>Teachers analyze results of Spring MAP data, ALMA grades, and relevant coursework to reflect on data.</p> <p>During the next lesson study, teachers reflect on their data, effectiveness of their implemented strategies, and steps moving forward.</p> <p>Do teachers feel they achieved the goals of the lesson study? Did the teacher achieve a result from their hypothesis?</p>	<p>MAP Data</p> <p>ALMA grades</p> <p>Relevant coursework (quizzes, homework, tests ec.)</p> <p>Final feedback survey on the process as a whole</p> <p>Student feedback surveys</p>

	Did the teachers gain more skills and/or awareness regarding highly capable students?	
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Part 4. Conclusion:

As Austina De Bonte (N.D) states “HiCap students have challenges in social and emotional development, delayed development of executive function, and are at significant risk of not developing grit or growth mindset if school is always ‘easy’ for them” (p.1). Every student has a diverse set of needs and it is the school’s responsibility to meet these needs. HiCap students have not “made it” simply because their test scores are higher. This professional development plan brings HiCap students into the same learning environment as their peers. Likewise, teachers will gain new skills and awareness of what it takes to produce growth in these students. As expected with any PD, the ultimate goal is to move every student forward on the path to becoming a more robust and knowledgeable student and human being.

APPENDIX A - Meeting Notes

Lesson Study Meeting Notes
<p>Date: _____</p> <p>Moderating Grade level: _____</p> <p>Meeting goals:</p> <p>1.</p> <p>2.</p> <p>Items discussed:</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>Action items:</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p> <p>Questions for admin:</p> <p>-</p> <p>-</p>

2. What learning activities did you not enjoy? Why?

APPENDIX D - Primary Feedback Form

Student Feedback
<p>1. Circle your favorite activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a. Option Ab. Option Bc. Option Cd. Option D
<p>2. Circle your least favorite activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">e. Option Af. Option Bg. Option Ch. Option D

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