



MT. BETHEL CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

a 2018 National Blue Ribbon School

The David Clune Award for Data Analysis and Educational Excellence Summary
Lisa Kelly, Mt. Bethel Christian Academy

When our Head of School, Jim Callis, arrived at Mt. Bethel Christian Academy in 2010, one of the first things he changed was our standardized testing process. He brought in both CTP and CPAA online assessments, and our students and faculty were challenged in new ways. Our first year of CTP testing, as predicted, did not yield the best looking results, but that was not a surprise given how we were asking students to think more critically and take a test in a way they were not accustomed to doing. However, Jim continued to notice in the subsequent years that we were behind other independent norms in several categories and grade levels. Coming from a data analyst background, I had always taken my student data and identified trends, tweaked curriculum, and rearranged scope and sequence to best benefit the students. After noticing that students in my grade and subject matters consistently made progress, Jim asked me to take that level of data analysis school wide, so beginning with our 2015-16 testing, I started the data analysis project.

Jim and I began by setting some parameters for how we expected MBCA to stack up against other independent schools, and we created a matrix that allowed us to quickly identify where we were comparatively speaking. Once we knew where we'd been, it was easy to identify where we needed to go to best service our students. The question then became how to best get there in order for the metrics to move. We decided to task each teacher with two sub-categories to focus on in one given academic year. This allowed us to pinpoint specific grade and subject level needs, assign teachers to specific topics and provide them with information and best practices to improve those areas, and most importantly, be able to track progress. These initial reports had information about current test results, specific examples for how to target the two assigned skills, and a summary of each skill from the CTP Content Standards Manual in order to understand the objective in as much detail as possible. Having very focused goals, a path for how to achieve them, and support for how to read and interpret the data gave each teacher control over the data and a path to follow.

In our first year of this project, the results were immediate, and gains were made. The teachers were able to make some changes to scope and sequence and ensure the skills they had been

tasked with improving had indeed been covered. We were very careful not to ask anyone to teach to the test, as that is not our school philosophy. However, we were also very conscientious that we had some skill gaps at each grade level that weren't being addressed by our current curriculum and/or the scope and sequence we were following, so we wanted to ensure there was some deliberate enforcement of the assigned skills. More importantly, the teachers, armed with specific and measurable goals, were invigorated and appreciated seeing their focus pay off with not only improved student scores, but more collaboration across both grade and subject levels.

In our second year of the project, we saw our metrics improve again. Our students were benefitting from improved and streamlined curriculum, some of which had been adjusted based on analyzing our weaknesses from previous years' testing. They were also benefitting from teachers who accepted their new goals as personal missions and were creative and purposeful in making changes that impacted student learning. We also saw increased communication and cooperation between grade levels who had goals in the same content areas and amongst teams of teachers in the same grade levels where goals could overlap.

We have continued to see progress each year since; so much so, that we were able to raise scores enough to be eligible for the 2018 National Blue Ribbon School award, which we were recently awarded as one of only 49 private schools across the nation. So, what were the principal conclusions as a result of this analysis? Assigning teachers two specific goals that are both focused in their curriculum and genuine to what they teach is critical to success. Additionally, giving teachers the opportunity to collaborate, the time to meet and discuss what things work and what things don't, and the ability to ask questions about data or testing is imperative. Providing the data in a narrative form with easy to understand graphs and explanations means the teachers can have clear and discernable goals without having to interpret the data for themselves. Lastly, having teacher buy-in to the project is essential.

If you're looking for more details regarding the process itself, I will be presenting a session on Thursday morning at 8:30 entitled *Pinpoint with Precision: Utilizing CTP Results to Set Individual Teacher Goals*.