

## Interdisciplinary Teaming Paper MLED 320

Content	Exemplary	Proficient	Approaching	Unacceptable
<p>Includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Description of the team members</li> <li>• Their stage of group development</li> <li>• Presence or absence of a Vision and mission, their organizational structure (leader, roles, norms, common policies, decision making process), team identity, their focus on curriculum, types of communication, and accountability</li> <li>• Commendations for team as well as suggestions</li> <li>• Use of 5 references to support your study</li> </ul>	<p>All content criteria are present and unit shows evidence of an insightful reflection, understanding, and knowledge of each team component.</p> <p>The unit is well organized, hangs together well, and is very easy to for any teacher to understand and to implement the unit.</p> <p>The culminating activity assesses the students' big idea and its rubric is aligned to the activity. (22) <i>21</i></p>	<p>Most content criteria are present and the unit shows evidence of a well-reasoned reflection, understanding, and knowledge of each unit component.</p> <p>The unit is organized and any teacher should be able to understand it and implement it.</p> <p>The culminating activity takes into account the students' big idea and its rubric is aligned. (20)</p>	<p>Most content criteria are present and the unit shows evidence of reflection, and some understanding, and/or knowledge of each unit component.</p> <p>The unit includes some organization and with some explanation teachers should be able to implement.</p> <p>The culminating activity takes into account what the team feels the students need to know or do at the unit's end. (18)</p>	<p>Some content criteria is present, but not comprehensive or connected. There is little evidence of understanding all the criteria or how it relates to the team's organization or curriculum part of the unit.</p> <p>The culminating activity or part of it is difficult to understand and does seem to relate to what the students should be able to know or do. (14)</p>
<p><b>Personal Engagement and Conventions</b></p>	<p>Consistent, clear, and coherent demonstration of personal engagement in responding to the task.</p> <p>Demonstrates mastery of grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling.</p> <p>Sophisticated sentence structure and imagery; language is distinctive. (8)</p>	<p>Clear and coherent demonstration of personal engagement in responding to the task.</p> <p>Demonstrates control of usage, grammar, spelling, and mechanics. (few errors).</p> <p>Sentence structure is varied. Language is powerful, and word choice is precise. (6)</p>	<p>Limited demonstration of personal engagement in responding to the task.</p> <p>May contain some intrusive errors in grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling.</p> <p>Uses appropriate vocabulary and sentence structure. (4)</p>	<p>No sense of personal engagement in responding to the task.</p> <p>Contains many intrusive errors in grammar, usage, mechanics, and spelling</p> <p>Minimal use of appropriate vocabulary and sentence structure. (2)</p>

*Your job is well done - you have covered the content well - would have liked a bit more on team accountability*

29/30

# J [REDACTED]'s Field Service & Research Project

Exeter West Greenwich Regional Junior High School

5/6/2010

Dr. John Niska's MLED 320  
[REDACTED]

29 (2)

My middle level team observations were a wonderful learning experience. From watching the banana split team at Exeter West Greenwich, I was able to study how a middle level team really works together in order to get the job done. The teachers treated me with the upmost respect and let me know that they saw me as a teacher and not a student. These team meetings lasted from 9:47 am until about 10:35 am.

Exeter-West Greenwich Regional Junior High School is a rural school located in central Rhode Island. It serves students in the towns of Exeter and West Greenwich, which have populations of about 6,200 and 5, 500. The current school building opened its doors in the year 1990, and has been well maintained; it looks brand new. Exeter-West Greenwich Junior High School consists of a 7<sup>th</sup> grade with a total of 167 students and 8<sup>th</sup> grade with a total of 168 students. There are 335 students all together. There are 43 teachers, and the school has its own principle. The students and teachers are split into 4 teams; the banana, blueberry, apple, and orange teams. The Junior High School is connected to the High School, but they do not share any staff, nor do they share a "PA" public address system. According to the NECAP results for the 2009 school year, the proficiency scores of Exeter-West Greenwich Junior High ranked above the Rhode Island average in all sections; reading, writing, and math.

The students that attend this school are mainly white Anglo-Saxon Americans. The school has a 98% attendance of Caucasian students, 1% African-American, and 1% Hispanic. This school does not have any Asian or Native American attendees. Only 1% of the school is in the English as a Second Language program, and the other 99% of students are non-recipients. In terms of special education, 1% of students are self-contained, 16% of students are general

education with supports, and the remaining 84% of students at Exeter-West Greenwich are non-recipients of special education services. Students at this school generally do not receive free or reduced lunch, only 13% qualify.

The banana split team consists of six teachers: Karen Reynolds, Hollice Emery, Heather Forman, Leslie Sawicki, Brian Ackerman, and Priscilla Sutter that undertake teaching both 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. Their team includes one class of 8<sup>th</sup> graders, known as the “algebra kids.” Karen Reynolds is the team facilitator and is also the History teacher. She is very organized and in command. She often took charge and got the team on track with what they needed to be doing. Her dark hair and tall stature make her seem like a force that shouldn’t be reckoned with; but she is secretly kind and giving at heart.

Heather Forman is the informal recorder and organizer. Her job at Exeter West Greenwich is as the English Language Arts teacher. She is organized to the point where she has a coffee maker and microwave in her room for teachers to use. She was constantly jotting everything down, and although she never formally introduced herself as the recorder she seemed to have all the past notes from team meetings. She is young, and fairly new to the school.

Hollice Emery teaches Science, and is a very kind and caring woman. She seemed to take me under her wing, and offered to let me know anything I needed to know. Leslie Sawicki, the Math teacher, was often venting about what students were doing wrong, and was the only one of the teachers who did not make me feel totally comfortable to be there. She is an older

woman with the classic math teacher glasses. Brian Ackerman and Priscilla Sutter are the team resource teachers.

This team is newly developed and only became a team at the beginning of this school year. Some of the teachers, Hollice Emery and Karen Reynolds, were previously on a team together, which really showed during the meetings. The two of them seemed to anticipate what one another was going to say. The rest of the team however, still seemed like they were getting to know one another. They are still in the forming stage of a team, and seemed to have much to learn. They did not have any clear vision and mission statement, norms, or policies. They did however make decisions very well together. The common planning time was used effectively; the teachers sat and talked about when they planned to give tests, had major projects due, and how to resolve issues. They seemed to not want to burden their students with several major tasks at once and were very considerate of student needs.

In an NMSA research summary it says, "An interdisciplinary team consists of two or more teachers from different subject areas and the group of students they commonly instruct. Team teachers plan, coordinate, and evaluate curriculum and instruction across academic areas. Teams cultivate meaningful and regular communication with families. Teams often share the same schedule and same area of the building. For teachers, teams provide a collaborative and supportive work group" (Interdisciplinary Teaming). Based on this research, I would classify my team as one that is structuring itself, but is overall efficient. The team consists of several subject areas and the teachers took the planning time to coordinate and evaluate certain things in their classes. They made it clear that they communicate with families; they were actually

sending letters home to parents about a new afterschool program they were going to be running daily. They all had classrooms in the same area of the building and they collaborated with one another, both in planning time and during classroom time.

“Building community and cohesiveness in a middle level team is difficult. It requires respect from each team member (Martin, 1999), support for one another (George, Lawrence, & Bushnell, 1998; Maute, 2003), and chemistry or team dynamics that encourages success (Jackson & Davis, 2000; Schamber, 1999)... One aspect of team cohesiveness and community is respect. Martin (1999) argued, “teachers on any team need to feel that they are valuable, contributing members” (p. 17). Without this equity, voices are silenced and not all feel respect” (Virtual Teaming). The teachers on the banana-split team seemed to be very cohesive. Even though they had only worked as a total team for such a short period of time, they all acted like friends. Their chemistry almost made me want to be a part of the team or even a student. I could see that with their humor and cohesiveness, the students must enjoy having them as their teachers.

“Regardless of its complexity, an integrated curriculum allows students to master standards and reach goals and objectives while demonstrating to them that real problem solving demands a perspective from many subject areas. An effectively planned and implemented integrated unit maintains curricular, instructional, and assessment integrity and motivates students to get involved in their own learning” (Designing Effective). The teachers from the banana-split team made it clear that they integrate their curriculum to best fit the students’ needs. They only spent a small portion of team time actually going over this

curriculum, they mostly used the time to talk about tests and problems with students, but they did seem concerned with integrating things to make them easier for their students.

"You wouldn't know it from current discussions about teacher effectiveness, but the talent and expertise needed to raise student achievement already exist in many, if not most, schools. Unfortunately, too few of them have a culture that encourages teachers and administrators to work together on a regular basis, to consult each other more often on matters of teaching and learning, to share responsibilities for instructional improvement, and to implement professional-learning opportunities that address both their needs and their students'... How do the schools and districts that commit themselves to continuous improvement and shared responsibility operate? First, their superintendents and principals establish both district- and school-level learning agendas, mapping out procedures for enacting them. In addition to having school wide learning teams, principals ensure that every teacher is a member of at least one other grade, subject, or interdisciplinary team , so that they are always prepared to tackle the next challenge that inhibits their students' individual learning progress and collective achievement results"(Teacher Learning). Luckily, the students at Exeter West Greenwich have teachers that are open to doing things in an interdisciplinary light. The teachers are open to new ideas and share things with one another. They all seem to genuinely want to help their students and go above and beyond to do so, such as afterschool programs.

"For many teachers who are assigned to a team for the first time, working on an interdisciplinary team represents a change from the security of their often isolated classrooms to a setting that requires collaboration, teamwork, and ongoing communication with other teachers. Since interdisciplinary teams are comprised of groups of teachers from different subject areas who work together to coordinate instruction, communication, and assessment for

a common group of students, teachers must learn to work collaboratively, establish equitable responsibilities among team members, and set attainable goals for the team. Further, once teams have established professional and interactive relationships, they must learn how best to use their group efforts given the goals they have set for themselves. Since very few educators are trained or prepared to work on teams, these are challenging and often frustrating tasks for even the most dedicated and caring teachers” (What Makes Interdisciplinary Teams Effective). Many of the teachers on the banana-split team had admitted to having had experience in interdisciplinary teams. They may not have worked together, but they had all worked on middle level teams before. They know how to interact with one another and do extremely well working collaboratively to come up with ideas and solutions.

I thought that the banana-split team meshed very well together as a team. In stating commendations I would say, they used their time effectively; they often were figuring out problems and talking about issues. They stayed on track and got through what they really wanted to get through. The teachers were extremely welcoming, and made me feel as if I were one of them. They had smiles on their faces, and humor in their voices. This seemed like it would be enough to cure any young teen’s nerves. These teachers were also working very hard to establish an actual “interdisciplinary team.” They have not been a team for long, and still have a few things to work out in terms of their mission and vision etc., but they constantly talk about building their team.

Some recommendations that I could give to this team are, to be a little more responsive. It took me several weeks to receive contact back from them. They also did not send me things when they said they were going to (a set of questions I had asked them to further better this

assignment). These teachers spent a great deal of time talking about students. While I think in some ways that is beneficial to find out what is going on in certain classes other than your own, I felt they spent too much time on those students. Lastly, I felt that this team still had much to work on. Even though they are working hard, they did not have many of the things that we as a middle level class have been asked to do. I did not hear of any mission or vision statement, and the teachers didn't know yet what their team norms or common policies were. These things seemed to vary class to class, and were yet to be established in this community.

## Works Cited

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24/30

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Personal Engagement and Conventions

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 will need clearer.

MLED 320-01

Team Paper

The middle school that I observed my team meetings at was Kickemuit Middle School. Kickemuit is located in Warren, Rhode Island. This middle school is a mixture of Warren students and Bristol students. This school has a 95% attendance rate, with 71% of students not eligible for subsidized lunch programs, and 95% not eligible for ESL ([infoworks.ride.gov](http://infoworks.ride.gov)). This school is located in a predominantly white, suburban community. Their student population is predominantly white as well. Kickemuit has three grades, eighth, seventh, and sixth. The school is set up to have teams for the grades. Teams are four teachers, Math, English, Science, Social Studies, with sometimes Special Educational teacher in the team as well.

The team I was assigned to was the Peach Team. This team consisted of Mrs. Miller who was the English teacher, Mr. White the Social Studies teacher, Mrs. Wells the Math teacher, and Mrs. McGonagall the Science teacher. All but the Science teacher Mrs. McGonagall's room was located right next to each other; her room was down the hall with all of the other science rooms. The team has a good chemistry about them. They all get along great and are comfortable. During meetings I have found them joking around with each other, sharing stories and laughing. Education World states that "You should laugh together, eat together, and make copies together at least twice a week." The team I visited was already at this stage of comfortableness. This team belongs to two other teams. The Blue Team is when the Peach Team meets with the Grade Team

Leader and talks about curriculum, and the Yellow Team is when the Peach Team meets with the Guidance Counselor and they talk about the students, or have parent/teacher conferences.

During my interview with a team member I uncovered that this team has no set roles. There is no facilitator, recorder, technology person; no one has a set job during the meetings. This struck me as odd considering they had a big team. Mrs. Miller however assumed the role as recorder herself. She took notes on every meeting and everything they said. She kept a folder of all the notes she took. One of the meetings I attended had the Grade Team Leader there. She was a lady who was voted in by all of her co-workers to lead the team. The meetings with the Grade Team Leader were set to talk about the curriculum going on in the classes. During this meeting however, the teachers had to grade writing assessments. A couple of weeks ago all the students at Kickemuit had to answer a writing prompt, then all the teachers had to grade them. During most of the meeting the teachers graded papers, and chatted with each other. At the end of the meeting the Grade Team Leader led a discussion on what they found from grading these papers, and what might be helpful to teach their students next year. As curriculum goes, the teachers got to reflect on what worked with most of the students and what skills had to be improved and who might need extra help. The teachers got to analyze their own curriculum privately and make adjustments for next year.

During the Peach meetings the team got together and talked about issues that might be going on with their students, what they are having trouble teaching or getting across to the students, and even talking about advisory and what happened in there. Teaming activities may include all or any of six features: (a) sharing of physical space; (b) planning curriculum; (c) collaboratively teaching, either as a whole class or with each teacher taking different combinations of students across the classes for specific lessons; (d) establishing common rules

across classes; (e) sharing of resources; and (f) collaboratively planning and administering assessment tasks (Northern Nevada Writing Project Teacher-Researcher Group, 1996). This team does all of those features during their team planning times. Six indicators of good practice have been identified that establish a well rounded team. First, each team member has a clear role with a definite purpose in the team. A positive interdependence between team players then fosters a "do or die" responsibility on each team member for the success or failure of the team. Second, an equitable distribution of responsibilities amongst team members is required. Third, team members are flexible and able to adapt to changes in both pedagogy and curriculum. Fourth, there is regular and open and honest communication amongst team members, and differences are dealt with as they arise. Fifth, the team has clear and attainable goals. Sixth, the team makes use of the expertise of all members of the team to gain the best possible outcome for students (Flowers et al., 1999, 2000, 2002; Pounder, 1999). This team lacks some of the key features. The team does not have any set roles. This I think doesn't hurt the team that much. They all function very well together even though no one is a clear leader, they have no trouble keeping on track and talking about what needs to be dealt with. The team also doesn't have any goals that they wish to obtain. When interviewing a teacher of the team, I asked if there were any set goals or principles for the team. She answered "We don't have set goals or anything; we just talk about the students or our work or anything that needs to be done". I feel that the team will eventually suffer without any goals of some sort. I don't understand how they would get anything done, or establish a curriculum without any set goals. I would assume the Grade Team Leader has set goals for the grade, but as for teams the team members just decide what is best and there is no documentation of it. The team however, is adaptable to changes. In my final meeting the teachers were discussing the advisory meetings for next year. They wanted to switch up advisory and

homerooms and who was in which ones. All of the teachers were flexible and willing to “swap” students. As stated before the teachers are also very good with communicating with each other, I sensed no hostility or drama between any of the teachers.

The Peach Team is a looping team. Looping is defined as an educational practice in which a single graded class of children stays with a teacher for two or more years or grade levels. The children and the teacher remain together as the class is promoted. ([info@ncrel.org](mailto:info@ncrel.org)). The grades the class is looped with is sixth and seventh. I feel there are advantages to this practice and disadvantages. The advantages to looping are that you get a better connection with your students. You really get to know them individually and their learning styles. It becomes easier to adapt your lessons. The students also get a better sense of security of being with the same teachers. They feel like they can share more with them and open up. The disadvantages would be dealing with a teacher you do not get along with for two straight years, new students coming into a class of second year loop students who already knew each other and less exposure to new teaching styles and students (EducationWorld.com). Looping does seem to work with this team. They know what works for them and their students, which is why they would like to mix up homerooms and advisories next year. The combination between some students and the teachers are not really working so they need to try something else out.

Teaming is something new to this school. I was told during an interview that teaming and advisory started three years ago. The team does not keep a log of minutes, the principle doesn't get a copy of when they meet, or for how long. The team usually meets for an hour, twice a week, sometimes three times a week. I feel this team is a great combination of teachers. They get

along well with each other and have the same goals when teaching. Suggestions I would have for this team is to establish goals for the team and students, norms for the meetings, and possibly set roles. I feel that not much will be accomplished if goals and principles are not established, how they would determine what is good for the students, and if they are teaching along to the curriculum if there are no goals. I really enjoyed visiting this team and observing how a team that has great chemistry really works. I wish to only be on a team as great as the Peach Team when I start teaching.