ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

Kelly A. Foster

The Graduate School
Morehead State University
April 19, 2013
ONE SCHOOLS TURNAROUND JOURNEY: FACING REALITY, DETERMINING THE BIG ROCKS, AND KEEPING THE EYE ON THE PRIZE

Abstract of capstone

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the College of Education At Morehead State University

By
Kelly A. Foster
Mount Sterling, KY

Committee Chair: Dr. David Barnett, Professor
Morehead, KY

April 19, 2013

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With the demands of high stakes accountability teachers and principals are expected to produce results in public education regardless of the school’s student population or location. The purpose of this capstone project is to document one urban high school’s journey throughout the turnaround process. The author shares firsthand knowledge of how identifying three focus areas or “big rocks” helped to increase student achievement on the Kentucky Performance for Educational Progress (KPREP) assessment system while growing a student-centered environment. The aim of this study is to provide other Kentucky educators with one school’s road map to successful school improvement.

KEYWORDS: turnaround, monitoring, interventions, student achievement

Candidate Signature

Date
ONE SCHOOLS TURNAROUND JOURNEY

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By

Kelly A. Foster

Approved by

Committee Member Date

Committee Member Date

Committee Member Date

Committee Chair Date

Director of EdD Date

Department Chair Date
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Executive Summary

What is the core of the capstone?

The core of this capstone centers on three theories that framed this two-part capstone. This study included the research of effective schools with a focus on the effective schools correlate of frequent monitoring of student progress. This study also included the research of systems thinking. These two concepts served as the framework that undergird this project embedded in both a case study of one urban high school and served as the foundation for course development in a university administrative turnaround program initiative.

This capstone highlights key factors in effective schools research that when embedded in a school turnaround leadership preparation program initiative leads to an organized system that correlated with improved student achievement outcomes. Many schools across the country have in place highly qualified educators and leaders who have the skills and disposition needed to turnaround schools but these educators lack an understanding of the systemic processes needed to reach this end. This study strives to inform educators of one school’s effective strategic turnaround process. Additionally, this study provides a framework for higher education turnaround courses that focus on improving student learning.

The framework of this study is graphically represented in Figure 1. Effective schools research provides the main pillar of this study that leads to a school culture shift in thinking that promotes a systems approach to effectively monitor student
progress. In turn, the goal of this system approach is to improve student achievement and create a sustainable system of change.
Figure 1

_Turnaround Initiative Case Study and University Preparation Guide_

- **Growth Mindset**
- **Effective Schools Research**
- **Systems Thinking**

_Frequently Monitor Student Progress_

1. Standard
2. Target
3. Baseline Assessment
4. Data-Driven Intervention

- **Increasing Student Achievement**
- **Sustainable Systems**
- **Bridging Theory and Practice**
Effective Schools

In 1966 a committee headed by James Coleman wrote a report, *Equality of Educational Opportunity*, to discuss the effectiveness of American education. Frequently named for the committee chair, the Coleman Report (1966) concluded that public schools did not make a significant impact on student success but credited the student’s background as the main reason for student success in school. The committee’s findings suggested that students from poor families could not learn regardless of what schools did (Coleman, 1966).

Many researchers including Ronald Edmonds, then Director of the Center for Urban Studies at Harvard University, responded to the Coleman Report by setting out to find schools where students from low incomes families were academically successful (University of Oklahoma, 2011). Edmonds, and other researchers such as Anderson, Brookover, Eubanks, and Levine researched achievement data from high poverty, academically successful schools and determined that all children could learn and that schools did have control over the factors that influenced student mastery of the content (Lezotte and Synder, 2011).

The research conducted by Edmonds, Anderson, Brookover, Eubanks, Levine and others in response to the Coleman Report identified characteristics of effective schools, regardless of the backgrounds of the students, which led to the development of the Effective Schools Correlates. Edmonds (1982) and other effective school researchers identified five characteristics of effective schools: (1) the principal’s leadership and attention to the quality of instruction, (2) a pervasive and broadly
understood instructional focus, (3) an orderly, safe climate conducive to teaching and learning, (4) teacher behaviors that convey the expectation that all students are expected to obtain at least minimum mastery, and (5) the use of measures of pupil achievement as the basis for program evaluation. The five characteristics of effective schools research provided schools with a guide for school improvement. Over time, additional research (University of Oklahoma, 2011) was conducted that led to the development of seven characteristics of successful schools that were no longer descriptive but prescriptive. This research shows that these seven characteristics are evident in schools that successfully teach all students regardless of socioeconomic status. These seven characteristics became known as the correlates of effective schools: (1) high expectations for success, (2) strong instructional leadership, (3) clear and focused mission, (4) opportunity to learn/time on task, (5) frequent monitoring of student progress, (6) safe and orderly environment, and (7) positive home-school relations (Lezotte and Synder, 2011).

Many researchers such as Edmonds, Anderson, Brookoveer, Eubanks, and Levine have studied the correlation between high performance in high poverty schools but in 1995 Reeves coined the phrase of 90-90-90 Schools (Reeves, 2013). According to Reeves (2000) 90-90-90 Schools contain the following characteristics: 90% or more of the students are eligible for free and reduced lunch, 90% or more of the students are members of a minority group, and 90% or more of the students met district or state academic standards in reading or another area. The 90-90-90 Schools research identified a common set of behaviors by school leaders and teachers in
schools with high achievement, high minority enrollment, and high poverty levels: (1) a focus on academic achievement, (2) clear curriculum choices, (3) frequent assessment of student progress and multiple opportunities for improvement, (4) an emphasis on nonfiction writing, (5) collaborative scoring of student work.

The researcher of this capstone noted that the research of the Effective Schools and the research of 90/90/90 Schools both highlighted that the correlation between frequently monitoring student progress through the use of assessments as a characteristic of successful schools regardless of the student population. Due to the correlation in both bodies of research the use of frequently monitoring student progress was chosen as research topic and has been embedded in both parts of this capstone.

Part one of this capstone focuses on one urban high school and centers on the correlate of frequent monitoring of student progress. According to Wallace, Espin, McMaster, and Deno (2007), monitoring student progress is an important component of the educational process and a correlate prominently found in successful schools. This capstone's case study of one urban high school highlights the implementation of an intentional system to frequently monitoring student progress which in turn helped to change the mindset of teachers and leaders to share a unified vision for change and increased achievement for all students.

Part two of this capstone focuses on creating university leadership preparation programs that bridge theory with practice in using effective schools research in the development of a turnaround course offering. Universities across the nation strive to
have programs designed to produce high quality educational leaders. Based on this researchers experiences, college courses are often well grounded in the theory of learning and leadership but sometimes lack authentic and practical applications of what is needed in schools today. University training programs are designed to teach aspiring leaders the skills necessary to lead effectively. It is this researcher’s opinion that many times personnel with State Departments of Education, in their monitoring and audits of schools find areas of weakness within the leadership and, try to retrain leaders when schools are persistently low performing. The question then becomes, how should university training programs and public schools work collectively to produce effective leaders? In turn, more effective leaders should produce more effective schools. The turnaround course developed in this capstone used a collaborative approach in working with Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) leadership in the co-design of this piloted turnaround course initiative.

Systems

Based on this researchers observations, many schools today lack the necessary systematic processes needed to meet the demands of high stakes accountability. This suggest that some educators recognize the fact that systems for school improvement are not in place but are unsure how to implement sustainable systems for school improvement. Senge (1990) calls systems thinking the cornerstone of change. When referencing systems thinking Senge is referring to a “body of knowledge and tools” (p. 10) that help identify “underlying patterns and how they can be changed. It is
School turnaround is an intricate process that requires all stakeholders to recognize that the current systems in place, or lack of, will only yield the same results it has been receiving. The same results are not an option for school leaders when faced with a school turnaround situation. Senge “believes that unless a system is changed, it will continue to create the same results” (Isaacson and Bamburg, 1992, p. 42). Betts (1992) concludes that no amount of time fine-tuning an old system will produce a significant improvement. The Commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Education, Dr. Terry Holliday, (2009) referenced Edward Deming, the father of quality management, when claiming that 95% of the problems in schools are related to a breakdown in the system with only 5% related to the people. The case study of this capstone illustrates how one urban high developed a systematic process with a focus on the effective school correlate of frequent monitoring. This process included student data analysis, instructional design and the development of an intervention system. The goal of the systemic process of frequent monitoring was to create a structure that would lead to school improvement and increased student achievement.

Growth Mindset

To get everyone on the same page in developing systemic and sustainable change, a unified growth mind-set must saturate the school culture (Dweck, 2010). Dweck’s research shows that students with a growth mindset focused on learning and nurtured an attitude that effort produces success. Her research demonstrated these
students outperformed their classmates who had a fixed mindset. When teachers had a growth mindset, many of the students who started the year as low achievers moved up to moderate or high achievers (Dweck, 2010). The teachers with this mindset believe all students can learn at high levels.

Once a culture that focuses on a growth mindset, realizing every child can grow academically, exists in a school the leadership can turn the focus to progress monitoring and creating a systemic process to monitor student growth. Schools can come to know where each child is in any given moment in mastering content, knowing student strengths and weakness and create systemic processes of intervention when necessary otherwise known as assessment for learning. An effective systemic process that includes standards, student friendly learning targets, frequent formative assessments and individualized interventions can change the classroom assessment process resulting in increased student achievement (Stiggins, 2007). In his book *Classroom Assessment for Student Learning Doing It Right-Using it Well* (CASL), Stiggins (2006) created a structure for schools to implement that focused on standard mastery for all students built around standards, student friendly learning targets and frequent progress monitoring.

In the development of any program, fidelity of implementation is also a critical component related to systems thinking (Stiggins, 2006). The work and research of Stiggins suggests the components of assessment for learning be followed in the order of the design model with the key component being the frequent monitoring of student progress through formative assessments. The components of
assessment for learning include: (1) provide students with a clear understandable vision of the learning target, (2) use examples and models of strong and weak work, (3) offer regular descriptive feedback, (4) teach students to self-assess and set goals, (5) design lessons to focus on one learning target at a time, (6) teach students focused revision, (7) engage students in self-reflection, and let them keep track of and share their learning (Stiggins, 2006).

**Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress**

This capstone provides a laser-like, in-depth focus on one of the correlates consistently present throughout the evolution and expansion of the effective schools research: frequently monitoring student progress. Based on this researcher’s experiences and observations, in today’s schools, progress monitoring is viewed much differently than in the past. Educators throughout history taught content, administered and scored tests and recorded student grades. Covering the material was the focus not student success. In order for schools to be considered successful today there must be a climate of ensuring all students academically achieve (Safer and Fleischman, 2005). Deno stated (as cited Safer and Fleischman, 2005, p.81) when teacher’s use progress monitoring, rather than just teaching the content and assigning a grade, “students learn more, teacher decision making improves, and students become more aware of their own performance.”

This researcher noted that in the past, remediation for content not mastered for the most part was left up to the growth mindset of the individual caring teacher in offering an option of after school tutoring. For many, this option was at the expense
of parents and their ability to hire private tutors to help address the student’s deficiencies. With the lack of systemic structures in place to determine specifically what a student does not know and no systemic processes in place for remediation, schools created an inequitable situation at the detriment of many high poverty, low performing students. The bell curve supported this type of injustice in education.

According to Fendler and Muzaffar (2008) the bell curve suggests that most students will receive an average grade while few of the students will fail, and few will excel. The bell curve perpetuates the belief in an unacceptable rate of student failures as opposed to promoting mastery for all students.

Willis (2008) states that bell curve testing and “grading systems tend to reduce motivation and increase student stress and alienation from school” (p. 61). According to Blankstein (2004) failure should not be an educational option. He suggests that educators focus on two key questions of learning. What should I do? How should I do it? In answering these questions, educators examine their practices in doing what needs to be done to help all students be successful where failure does not have to be an option for any student. Fullan (1991) claims that educators must embrace the idea of having a “moral purpose” to educate all students rather than accepting that a certain percentage will fail as stated in the bell curve. Based on this researchers observation, when the teachers at Fern Creek Traditional High School (FCTHS) started examining their practices and monitoring individual student progress more students started to meet standards and a culture of learning for all began to develop.
The research of Stiggins and Chappuis (2005) states that collective change must occur within a school in order to balance assessment of learning with assessment for learning as a priority. Relying on the results of standardized tests will not close the achievement gap. However, this researcher hypothesizes that involving students in classroom assessment practices will support student learning and lead to the closing of achievement gaps. Students decide early on about themselves as learners based on information provided to them from classroom assessments. Over time, this information leads students to determine whether they are capable of succeeding in the classroom or not (Stiggins & Chappuis, 2005). Therefore frequent monitoring of student progress and student feedback provided on a regular basis are key components of student success. FCTHS built its student progress monitoring system around standards, assessments, feedback and interventions.

Standards/Learning Target

Frequent monitoring of student progress of assessment for learning begins with a specific standard, or piece of content, in mind. The Kentucky Core Academic Standards (KCAS) are the focus at FCTHS. Teachers deconstruct the standard into a student friendly learning target which gives students the expected goal in their language of understanding. Samples of exemplary student work based on the target are also shared with students to help demonstrate what mastery looks like for the standard (Stiggins, 2007). It is key that both the teacher and student understand the content of the standard and the goal of the learning target in order for student growth to occur. Schools and university preparation programs must include in their teaching
and leading an understanding of and an ability to create systemic processes for monitoring student progress in order to create an effective classroom and school. Classrooms that lack a student progress monitoring system produce struggling students who could go months without intervention which leads students to disengage from school and fall further behind (Barton, 2005). This researcher has observed several beginning teachers that do not have a clear understanding of the importance of monitoring student progress let alone an effective system in place to monitor student growth. Because of this, the beginning teacher tends to be more focused on covering the content than meeting the learning needs of all students. Universities must keep abreast of changes from the field and embed these practices in their teacher preparation programs to create a seamless transition from training to practice. This process allows public schools and higher education entities to work collaboratively in preparing teachers with the needed skills to bridge theory with application.

**Formative Assessment**

Frequent assessments that are congruent to the learning target are used to determine if the student has mastered the standard, specific content, and to help guide instructional decisions. Educators commonly refer to these assessments as formative assessments. Stiggins (2006) stated that these assessments are given throughout teaching and learning to diagnose student needs, plan instructional next steps, provide student feedback they can use to improve the quality of their work, and help students feel in control of their learning. Sadler (1989) explains “that for students to be able to improve, they must have the capacity to monitor the quality of their” (p. 121) work
while producing it. He states that students must know what quality work looks like, be able to objectively compare their work to the standard, and improve their work based on feedback. Educators must recognize that formative assessment is not about giving a grade but about providing students with effective feedback that will help students master the standard and develop ownership of their learning. The effect of assessment for learning or formative assessment is four to five times greater than the effect of reduced class size when it comes to increased student achievement (Ehrenberg, Brewer, Gamoran, & Willms, 2001).

**Individualized Interventions**

Emerging research demonstrates that differentiated instruction can significantly improve student achievement (Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007). Formative assessment results serve to inform educators not only of student deficiencies but of ineffective practices. The results guide teachers to differentiate methods of delivery in order to design individual learning opportunities that meet the needs of students. The research of Stiggins (2006) claims that all students show achievement gains with the use of formative assessments and interventions but the largest gains come from the lowest achievers. Using assessment results to design individualized interventions provides students with another opportunity to master the learning target. Guskey (1997) states that assessments must be followed with high-quality, corrective instruction designed to remedy student errors identified in the assessment. The interventions must present the concept in a new way and engage students in different learning experiences (Guskey, 1997).
Summary

In summary, this capstone focused on the research of Lezotte and Synder (2011) on Effective Schools; Betts (1992) and Senge (1990) on systems thinking and Dweck (2010) on growth mindset and how it was used in one urban high school’s turnaround journey and as the foundation for university administrative turnaround course. The strategies and systems identified throughout the capstone, when implemented with fidelity, can lead to sustainable systems that increase student achievement and in better preparing tomorrow’s leaders.

Who is the capstone meant to impact?

This capstone is meant to impact teachers and administrators across Kentucky dedicated to school improvement. With the development of this capstone project, university professors will have ideas and strategies to bridge theory and practice. This capstone will provide insight into one school’s turnaround process as well as provide documentation of one school’s turnaround journey. With this information, those who train future teachers and future school administrators may gain additional insight into some of the current challenges related to school improvement. This capstone can impact site based policies and procedures at the school level as well as the university level. Teachers can use the information from this capstone project to develop systems that focus on monitoring student growth and designing individualized interventions. The overall goal of this capstone is to show educators that student achievement can increase with the intentional focus on frequent monitoring of student data using effective schools research and the coordinated
efforts of various entities in designing effective training programs. Effective schools research strategies, when implemented in a school turnaround effort, can cultivate a growth mindset that provides the opportunity for sustainable change to occur.

How was the capstone project implemented?

The implementation of this capstone began in July of 2010 when the Educational Recovery team (ER) from the Kentucky Department of Education began working with the Principal of Fern Creek Traditional High School (FCTHS). Make-up of the ER team consisted of: one Educational Recovery Leader (ERL) and two Educational Recovery Specialists (ERS), one in math and one in literacy. Additional team members included the principal, a math and an English resource teacher.

FCTHS had been identified as a persistently low-achieving (PLA) school by KDE based on No Child Left Behind Scores. Under KRS 158.6455, Kentucky determined schools to be identified as PLAs by scoring in the bottom 5% based the school average reading and math scores on the state assessment. Fern Creek Traditional High School fell in the bottom 5% and had never met their NCLB, Annual Measurable Objectives.

In the beginning of the implementation of the capstone, the ER team attended a 10-day school turnaround training. The training was led by Dr. Joseph Murphy from Vanderbilt University to discuss school turnaround and the importance of having three focus areas. Dr. Murphy referred to these three focus areas as the “three big rocks”. The ER team, in collaboration with the principal and resource teachers identified the three big rocks for FCTHS. The three big rocks were: 1) professional
learning communities 2) college and career readiness and 3) monitoring of student data combined with targeted student interventions. Dr. Murphy also charged each team with developing a 30-60-90 plan that would be used to monitor the development of each “big rock”. The 30-60-90 day plan would be reviewed weekly to monitor the progress of the goals set for 30 days into turnaround, 60 days into turnaround, and 90 days into turnaround. The ER team and the school leadership team collaborated in the development of a 30-60-90 day systemic plan that would become the driving force of the turnaround process.

Just as the leadership team identified three big rocks to guide the turnaround process of FCTHS, it was important to identify three big rocks for the turnaround course that was developed as part of the capstone. The three big rocks that served as the focus of the turnaround course developed in collaboration with the Kentucky Department of Education became: 1) curriculum, instruction and assessment (CIA) 2) systems thinking and 3) transformational leadership. This course was designed using effective schools research and turnaround research to enhance and support the three rocks.

**Why were this capstone and related strategies selected?**

Professional Learning Communities (PLC), College and Career Readiness (CCR), and Monitoring of Student Data/Targeted Interventions were identified as the three big rocks of school turnaround. These three rocks were chosen because the results of the Leadership Assessment indicated that FCTHS did not have a culture of collaboration amongst the staff and student data were not being used to make
instructional changes that lead to college and career readiness attainment. In his work *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Covey (1989) observed that: “The key is not to prioritize what’s on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities” (p. 161). With a prioritized and intense focus on these identified areas, FCTHS was able to proceed with a unified vision to collectively develop a systemic process to produce improved outcomes.

**When was the capstone implemented?**

Part one, the FCTHS portion of this capstone project was implemented in August of 2010 with the development of a 30-60-90 day plan and establishing a system to monitor student data.

The 30-60-90 day plan was built with a focus on the three big rocks. The 30-60-90 plan is based on prioritizing short and long term goals. Schools must ask what needs to be accomplished in the first thirty days, sixty days and ninety days to turn a school around. The FCTHS plan included a list of strategies to the three big rocks specific to FCTHS turnaround needs that included timelines and persons responsible. Progress was monitored weekly in instructional leadership meetings that included the ER team and school leadership team members. Progress monitoring of student work was based on six-week and twelve-week teacher designed assessments covering state standards. The initial assessment and data management system began with Algebra II and English II during fall 2010. Beginning August, 2011 biology and US History followed the same assessment and data management system.
A room in the school, later called the data war room, was developed that provided ongoing data from assessments. Originally data from six and twelve week assessments comprised most of the available data. Other data sets were added over the course of the year and included data related to PLAN and ACT results, student attendance and behavioral data. Results from teacher-developed assessments identified students as green, yellow and red. Students identified as green students had mastered the content, yellow students had partial mastery of the content and red students had limited understanding of the content. This identification system allowed the school to schedule students into targeted interventions and help students with specific deficiencies. In addition, this system allowed teachers the opportunity to further differentiate instruction to address student weaknesses in a timely and effective manner.

Phase two, creating university turnaround course work, began in the fall of 2012. A partnership was formed between Morehead State University and the Kentucky Department of Education to develop courses that would provide training that would produce effective school leaders using current research and effective best practices. The course included research, activities, articles and practical application of materials in an eighteen week course centered on the curriculum, assessment and instruction (CIA), systems thinking and transformational leadership that included the correlates of effective schools.
Impact of the capstone

Findings from this capstone support the importance and impact of following the proven research of effective schools, systems thinking and creating a growth mindset. Based on the results of the 2012 Leadership Assessment, developing a systemic process for frequent monitoring of student progress provided FCTHS a checks and balance system that correlated with a positive impact on student outcomes and changed the professional culture of FCTHS. To determine the impact of the capstone quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Quantitative data were collected during the turnaround process that included ACT scores, the percentage of students scoring proficient on the reading and math on state assessment, and the percentage of students meeting the college and career readiness benchmarks. The quantitative data presented in the case study displays a correlation between improved student achievement and frequent monitoring of student progress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>% Proficient in Reading</th>
<th>% Proficient in Math</th>
<th>% CCR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>57.2%</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>66.9%</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data not reported due to new accountability model.
The results in Table 1 show nearly a 10% growth in proficiency in reading and more than 20% growth in mathematics for FCTHS. A review of district data reveals a .54% increase in proficiency for reading and -1.56% decrease in mathematics. The changes at the state level were -.87% decrease in reading proficiency and .07% increase in proficiency in mathematics. Speculation among the ER team for the 10% growth in reading and 20% plus growth in mathematics is due to the intentional implementation of a data monitoring system to track student progress and determine individual interventions.

Results from Table 2 indicate an increase in all subject areas on the ACT from March 2011 to March 2012. The ER team speculates that this growth correlates with the implementation of the college and career readiness standards into the curriculum.

Table 2

*Fern Creek Traditional High School ACT Data 2011-2012*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>ACT March 2011</th>
<th>ACT March 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from the Kentucky Department of Education School Report Card (2012b).
Qualitative data were collected using surveys to gather teacher perceptions of the systemic processes developed in the FCTHS turnaround initiative with a focus on frequent monitoring. The initiative used and supported the research of effective schools, systems thinking and a growth mindset through the correlate of frequently monitoring data to increase student achievement. Teacher open response comments provided data that suggest changes are taking place and moving FCTHS towards becoming a proficient school. Listed below are the six questions from the teacher perception surveys and selected responding teacher comments. This survey was given to 85 teachers and 24 responded to at least one question.

**Question 1: Describe how data days have affected your practice?**

T1: Data Days guide my instruction, establish goals and benchmarks, and have increased my pedagogical skills.

T2: The planning process during data days help me to properly identify student strengths and weakness based on standards and providing systemic plans for intervention.

T3: Frequent monitoring of student data created an intentional focus for Fern Creek Traditional High School. Data days guide our work in adjusting instruction according to the data.

**Question 2: Have your thought processes changed in the past 2.5 years of turnaround on administering and monitoring frequent assessments? If so, please explain how and why this change has impacted your instructional practices?**
T1: I feel validated. The gains we have made are the reason I come to work. I knew data were important but the PLC's and Data Days have strengthened that.

T2: I assess more frequently and review results more critically. I also spend more time reviewing the results with students.

T3: I am more focused on the exact skills I am teaching and assessing. I better understand where my students are at all times. We now ask WHY we get certain results as opposed to looking at the students for the reasons for the poor results.

Question 3: List and describe the processes that have been put in place the past 2.5 years that make you work more effectively?

T1: PLC's, data days and an overall culture of collaboration have made our instruction more effective.

T2: Asking students to reflect more often allows me to see what they think about what they are learning.

T3: PLC’s and common planning gave me a chance to collaborate with colleagues and design lessons.

Question 4: Rank order the effectiveness of the following at Fern Creek Traditional High School since the beginning of turnaround in 2010. (1 being the highest 6 the lowest) *Ranking is average of survey data. The researcher believes that PLCs received the highest ranking due to the fact that they occur weekly and teachers recognize the benefits from the collaboration. The researcher believes College Access Time received the lowest ranking due to the fact that it is a district initiative that does not address the individual needs of FCTHS.
Question 5: Describe how your mindset has changed in regard to increased student achievement for all students during FCTHS's turnaround process?

T1: Thinking of achievement in terms of meeting learning targets rather than earning points in a grade book has greatly influences my instruction.

T2: I no longer comment "I can't believe they failed". I ask myself "Why they have failed."

T3: The red, yellow green system and targeted interventions has proven to be valuable to increase student achievement.

Question 6: How has the culture of teaching and learning changed at FCTHS since the beginning of turnaround in 2010?

T1: I have become more reflective about my instructional practice. I see student results on assessments as a reflection of my own capacity to teach. When students do not perform well I find the necessary resources to continuously grow and enhance my ability to teach. Our reputation with other teachers throughout the district, parents and students is improving. I hear kids say less negative things about our school from three years ago.
T2: Teachers now take ownership for the results. No longer a culture of blame but shared educational experience in which all members of the institution strive for continuous improvement.

T3: School is now more student centered than was previously. I think frustration with peers has INCREASED when peers do NOT appropriately participate in the suggested new practices.

**Impact of Case Study on the Development of Turnaround Course**

In the early stages of the development of the turnaround course there was an assumption that the training provided through KDE for ER specialists would simply be converted to an 18 week graduate-level course. To be sure, many of the resources used to train ER specialist have found their way into the course. Nevertheless, not infusing the course with the rich data and experiences described in the case study seems to cheapen both the case study and the proposed course. Therefore, the following is informed by close to three years of working in a struggling school, trying the turnaround techniques that were part of the ER training, and learning from what seemed to go right and mistakes that were made by both FCTHS and ER staff. On some days, perhaps more like weeks, I questioned whether we would ever see tangible results. But during the journey, the change was tangible almost on a daily basis. The resources and systems that were used in the turnaround journey and documented in the case study, as well as this researcher’s experience as a ERL impact the development of the turnaround course.
To be sure, the items that were ‘on target’ include professional learning communities, developing a data management system to monitor student progress and adjust instruction, as well as the 30-60-90 day planning process. On the other hand, strategies that seemed to have less of an impact include the state’s new assessment system and professional growth and effectiveness system. This may be because they are still in the implementation stages. Nevertheless, it is important for future instructors of this course to know the current assessment and evaluation systems being used in schools across the state.

With the completion of the newly developed turnaround course, plans are in place for a Type II proposal submission to the university for approval. Anticipated time for approval of this course offering is fall 2014. Findings from the university turnaround course work can become an area of study for succeeding EdD candidates.

**Limitations of the study**

All studies have limitations. The following are a few that impacts whether the findings from this capstone can be replicated in another school in another location.

1. This case study was limited to one urban, high poverty high school in Kentucky.

2. The population is a high poverty, diverse group with 43% African American, 54% free and reduced lunch and 9% special needs. Therefore, many factors outside the school environment played a role in student achievement.
3. The qualitative portion of the study was limited to 85 teachers from one urban high school. Attrition of teachers leaving the school during the two and a half years of this capstone impacted qualitative results.

4. Some state assessment changes during this capstone created an obstacle in comparing year to year data.

5. A strong Teacher Union may have influenced teacher mindset in the use of time and collaboration and doing what needs to be done to produce successful turnaround.

Reflections

As the result of this study the researcher will continue to use the research of Lezotte and Snyder as well as the systems thinking approach and growth mindset when working with low performing schools. Professional development based on the implemented strategies and research could be provided to teachers and administrators based on the result of this capstone. University professors can use the turnaround course strategies and readings developed in this capstone to help administrators better prepare for the challenges of school improvement.

After analyzing the results of the teacher perception survey the researcher realized it would have been powerful to administer the survey to the teachers at the beginning of turnaround process as well. The results of the survey support the theory that in order for sustainable change to occur it must develop from the inside out. Based on this researcher's observation of the educators at FCTHS, sometimes educators focus too much on how to change student data rather than recognizing that
teaching practices must change before student data can change. Evidence gathered for this capstone suggests that the implementation of a system to frequently monitor student data may produce culturally and instructional changes in the classroom that contributed to the academic success of the students at FCTHS.
One Schools Turnaround Journey: Facing Reality, Determining the Big Rocks, and Keeping the Eye on the Prize

Kelly A. Foster
Morehead State University
Abstract

With the demands of high stakes accountability, teachers and principals are expected to produce results regardless of the school’s student population or location. The purpose of this capstone project was to document one urban high school’s journey through the turnaround process. The author shares firsthand knowledge of how identifying three focus areas or “big rocks” helped to increase student achievement while growing a student-centered environment. The aim of this study was to provide other Kentucky educators with one school’s road map to successful school improvement.
One Schools Turnaround Journey: Facing Reality, Determining the Big Rocks, and Keeping the Eye on the Prize

During the 2009 session of the Kentucky General Assembly Senate Bill 1 was passed into law and public educators of Kentucky began a new journey focusing on school assessment and accountability. Senate Bill 1 has four key areas: content of the state assessment, how individual subjects will be assessed, when the assessment will be given, and how the overall public school assessment system should look (Kentucky Department of Education, 2013).

Senate Bill 1 also addressed the need to adopt the Common Core Standards. The goal for the new standards was to provide a clear understanding of what students are expected to learn. The Common Core Standards were to be more in-depth than the current curriculum which consisted of Program of Studies and Core Content 4.1 on which Kentucky based its state assessment and graduation requirements. The Common Core Standards were designed to facilitate mastery learning that prepare student for success from elementary through postsecondary education. The call for assessment literacy and content knowledge for all Kentucky teachers was addressed in Senate Bill 1 leading KDE to develop an instructional and curriculum framework, and to establish characteristics of highly effective teaching and learning (Kentucky Department of Education, 2012c)

In the spring of 2010, KDE applied for but did not receive the first round of Race to the Top federal funding (Kentucky Department of Education, 2011c). KDE had planned to use Race to the Top federal dollars to fund many aspects of SB 1 like
teacher training for the new common core standards (Kentucky Department of Education, 2012c). When the funding was not awarded, KDE was forced to look elsewhere for money to support the implementation of SB 1. This, along with a state budget shortfall, led to the reorganization of KDE in July of 2010 (Kentucky Department of Education, 2010b). Eight associate commissioner offices were streamlined into six offices and each office had to focus directly on priorities established by the Kentucky Board of Education. The six offices created under the reorganization were: Office of Guiding Support Services and General Counsel; Office of Administration and Support; Office of Knowledge; Information and Data Services; Office of Next-Generation Schools and Districts; Office of Assessment and Accountability; and Office of Next-Generation of Learners (Kentucky Department of Education, 2010b).

The Division of District 180, which is part of the Office of Guiding Support Services and General Counsel, was established to focus on the turnaround efforts of schools that have been identified as persistently low-achieving (PLA) by the Kentucky Department of Education based on No Child Left Behind scores. State statutes, KRS 160.346, require KDE to identify the bottom 5% of PLA schools that were then eligible for federal School Improvement Grants (SIG). Kentucky’s criterion “for identifying PLAs incorporates an average of the percentage of students proficient or higher in reading and mathematics on the state assessments under KRS 158.6455” (Kentucky Department of Education, 2011a). Table 4 identifies the three categories into which a school could fall and be identified as a PLA school.
Table 3

How PLA Schools are Identified

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal Tier 1 PLA</th>
<th>1) A Title I school that is in the lowest five percent or lowest five scoring schools, whichever is greater, of all Title I schools that are identified in any one of the school improvement categories under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 and that failed to make AYP for three consecutive years.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) A Title I high school whose graduation rate, based on the state's approved graduation rate calculation, has been 60 percent or less for three consecutive years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Tier 2 PLA</td>
<td>1) A Title I school that is in the lowest five percent or lowest five scoring schools, whichever is greater, of all Title I schools that are identified in any one of the school improvement categories under the federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 and that failed to make AYP for three consecutive years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2) A Title I high school whose graduation rate, based on the state's approved graduation rate calculation, has been 60 percent or less for three consecutive years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Tier 3 PLA</td>
<td>All Title I schools that are identified in any school improvement category under NCLB and are not included in the definitions of Federal Tier I.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Adapted from Kentucky Department of Education. (2011a) Press Release No. 11-078.

In 2010, each PLA school that was identified as persistently low-achieving received a leadership assessment through the Kentucky Department of Education conducted by a team of current and former educators and parents trained in the
process (Kentucky Department of Education, 2012a). The leadership assessment focused on the indicators from the *Standards and Indicators for School Improvement* (SISI) document. The SISI document is used to identify opportunities for improvement and provide guidance for maximizing those opportunities through planning and developing school plans. The leadership assessment determined the capability and capacity of the school’s principal, school council, and district leadership to lead the turnaround effort (Kentucky Department of Education, 2010b).

**Statement of the Problem**

As a school administrator and turnaround specialist since 1999, this researcher has noted that often teachers do not seem to understand the connection between monitoring student progress and increasing student achievement. This suggests the lack of frequent monitoring of student progress is a problem in many schools. A common issue is that people “just don’t know what they don’t know”. Many teachers do not understand that monitoring student progress is the key to increasing student achievement and, often do not realize the value of using specific achievement data. Monitoring student progress and using data to drive instruction are the key to improving schools (Lezotte and Snyder, 2011). It takes time to monitor student progress and if teachers do not feel like they have to give the time then this may be an indication that the school’s culture is built that is centered around adult needs and not student needs.

As an educator trained to observe and evaluate teachers, this researcher, noted that the short term problem is that teachers do not understand the importance of
monitoring student data and how to use these data to drive daily instruction and provide individual interventions to students. Barton (2005) notes that a long term problem is that if teachers do not consistently implement the daily practice of monitoring student data and designing student specific interventions student achievement will not increase over time and students will fall further behind.

**Significance of the Project**

In the spring of 2010, FCTHS was identified by the KDE as a persistently low-achieving (PLA) school after not meeting No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Annually Yearly Progress (AYP) since 2004. In February 2010, a Leadership Assessment Team organized by KDE conducted a leadership assessment in FCTHS. This assessment focused on the indicators from the SISI document. In July of 2010, FCTHS was assigned an Educational Recovery Leader (ERL) and two Educational Recovery Specialists (ERS) to help lead the turnaround process. The ERL’s role was to mentor the principal on how to become an instructional leader and to build sustainable systems to promote student achievement in the building. The ERS’s roles focused on working with reading and math teachers to improve instructional strategies.

**Causes of the Problem**

Not only was the school facing years of low test scores and the stigma of not meeting NCLB’s Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) since 2004, the district student assignment plan segregated poor minority students rather than spread diversity across the district. The student assignment plan divided the district into three networks...
(Jefferson County Public Schools, 2012). Each network contained high schools that were labeled as a district magnet school and other high schools are labeled by professional career themes. Students living in all three networks could apply to attend one of the district magnet schools regardless of where they lived. This was an attempt to provide access to the various magnets and programs throughout the district. However, the reality is that students who were higher achieving and from higher socio-economic backgrounds in the district applied and were accepted to the district magnet schools because they had good grades, high achievement scores, and few if any discipline problems.

The assignment plan resulted in FCTHS having a distinct disadvantage in terms of bringing students to the school. Approximately 1,700 students living in the reside area of FCTHS are enrolled in other schools. The average median income of the Fern Creek zip code, 40291, was $62,575 in 2010. Only 10.6% of students who lived in the 40291 zip code had a household median income of $62,575 or higher; the majority of students were attending other schools in the district (Jefferson County Public Schools, 2011). The enrollment process impacted the make-up of the student body at FCTHS because it allowed students in the reside area the option of applying to district magnet programs rather than attending their home school (Kentucky Department of Education, 2010c).

The school also had to deal with a culture that was influenced by the local teacher association. Members of the turnaround team noted that the school had a teacher-centered culture rather than a student-centered culture. The teacher contract
required teachers to have 50 minutes of planning each day and also were only required to stay after school 60 minutes each week. These types of stipulations created a culture that pits student needs against adult (teacher) wishes. A school culture built around teacher needs was an additional barrier to increasing student achievement. Deal and Peterson (1999) state that improvements in student achievement will happen in schools with a positive and professional culture.

This researcher noted that the teachers also seemed to lack ownership of the curriculum due to the fact that the district provided a pre-packaged curriculum of standards that were not deconstructed by teachers and pacing maps that were not developed by classroom teachers. The ability of the teachers to successfully teach the content was hampered because they had not examined the standards through the deconstruction process. Therefore, they did not own the content or have a clear understanding of how the activities tied to the standards.

Another factor that this researcher noted that lead to low student achievement was that the teachers often taught in isolation and did not participate in professional learning communities where they could share instructional strategies or monitor student data. Teachers taught what they wanted to teach, how they wanted to teach it, and were not held accountable for teaching state standards or meeting individual student needs. The district provided curriculum maps but they were not always tied to the state standards and there was not a system in place for the principal to monitor what was being taught. The school also lacked a system for teachers to monitor student performance or make instructional changes based on student results.
Context of the Study

As shown in Table 4 during the 2010-2011 school year Fern Creek Traditional High School had an enrollment of 1,470 students with the following distributions: 53% of the students were White, 41% African American, and 6% were classified as other. In addition, 54% of the students received free or reduced lunch and 9.3% of students were identified as special needs students. There were 67% of students who scored proficient in reading. Of those students 78% of the white student population scored proficient and 47% of the African American student population scored proficient. There were 53% of students who scored proficient in math. Of those students 65% of the white student population scored proficient and 33% of the African American student population scored proficient (Kentucky Department of Education, 2010c).
Table 4

*Fern Creek Traditional High School Student 2010-2011 Population and % Proficient*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2010-2011</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Proficient Reading</th>
<th>Proficient Math</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All students</td>
<td>1470</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free/Reduced</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. Adapted from Kentucky Department of Education School Report Card (2011).*  
*Indicates that there are not enough students in this subpopulation to track proficiency.*

One of the requirements of the intervention system for PLA schools (703 KAR 5:180) is that the personnel make-up of the school is changed based on the intervention option selected. Selecting the intervention option is guided by 703 KAR 5:180 and may include the school’s site-based decision making council, the district superintendent, or the Kentucky Commissioner of Education. Personnel with FCTHS staff chose the re-staffing model. The entire faculty had to be screened by the principal and 50% of the faculty had to be removed before the start of the 2010-2011 school year. In August of 2010, Fern Creek began the school year with 38 new teachers to the building of which 18 were first year teachers and a total staff of 76 teachers.
This researcher noted that the turnaround process and the continuous monitoring of student progress impacted the students and faculty of Fern Creek Traditional High School. The turnaround process with an intentional focus on monitoring student progress forced teachers to collaborate with each other. By implementing formative assessment and looking at 6 and 12 week assessments, teachers knew what standards the students were mastering and which students needed interventions. When frequent monitoring was implemented, there were increased levels of student achievement. The increased levels of student achievement led to an increase in the percentage of students who were college and career ready (CCR). FCTHS increased the percentage of students meeting the CCR benchmark: 18 on the English ACT, 19 on the math ACT, and 20 on the reading ACT, these results accounted for a 20% increase in the percentage of students CCR in 2010 to 2012 (Kentucky Department of Education, 2012b).

During the 2011-2012 school year CCR became 20% of the high school accountability index causing an intentional effort to increase CCR. FCTHS CCR goal for the 2011-2012 school year was 27.1%. FCTHS met the state goal with a 31% CCR rate. CCR continues to be a major focus during year three of turnaround at FCTHS. In 2010, 19% of the students were meeting CCR, in 2011, there were 31% of the students meeting CCR, and in 2012, 39% of the students were meeting CCR (Kentucky Department of Education, 2012b). There was a correlation between the sustainable student data monitoring system that had been built and the increased about of students meet the CCR benchmarks.
Table 5

Fern Creek Traditional High School % of Students College and Career Ready

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% of students CCR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on observing the school culture, this researcher noted that during the turnaround process the culture of the building seemed to change from an adult centered environment to a student centered environment that focused on student growth. Examples of student success were constantly being exhibited throughout the building and students displayed school pride by wearing newly created Fern Creek spirit gear. Teachers began to focus on individual student success by looking at data rather than just teaching content. Students began to monitor their progress by tracking their own progress to standards mastery. The school began to celebrate student success by acknowledging student growth with pizza parties, ice cream socials, and t-shirts. Students began to own their academic success; they wanted to be rewarded. An after school targeted intervention program (TIP) was created to help students recover standards. This researcher observed that student participation rose from 37% in 2010 to 62% in 2012.
All PLA schools were assigned three Educational Recovery staff members. The Educational Recovery Leader mentored the principal on how to be an Instructional leader and the Educational Recovery Specialists worked with teachers to improve instructional strategies. Together the Educational Recovery Team worked with school leadership to establish systems to build school improvement and increase student achievement. In the spirit of full disclosure, this researcher served as the Educational Recovery Leader. The ERL's role was to guide the implementation of systems that promoted successful school change such as rigorous instruction and increased student achievement. The data included in the study are public data released from the Kentucky Department of Education.

Guiding Question

Will developing a systematic approach of identifying standards, developing student friendly learning targets, monitoring student progress, and designing interventions correlated with increases in student achievement?

Literature Review

Based on the Leadership Assessment and this researchers observation most teachers at FCTHS taught their content in isolation, administered an assessment, and moved to the next unit. There was no effort being made to see if the content was congruent to standards. Student data were not being used to inform instructional decisions or design interventions. The teacher's goal was to teach the content rather than know their students' academic level and making sure they were receiving the individualized instruction needed in order to get to master the standard. Stiggins
(1999), the founder of the Assessment Training Institute, noted that even though assessments are important in education today, very few teachers receive formal training in assessment design or analysis. Instructional leaders must help teachers understand the importance of the connections between standards, assessments, student data, interventions and increased student achievement.

The Importance of the Learning Target

Brookhart (2012) examined monitoring student progress and noted the importance of the feedback that students receive during progress monitoring. She states that having a clear learning target allows students to have a purpose for using teacher feedback. Students need a clear learning target so that they can connect their learning to meeting the target. Simply put, teachers had to move away from giving feedback to students that consisted of just marking the answer wrong. Williams (2003) also noted the importance of feedback and suggested that feedback is most meaningful when it is based on solid data. Teachers had to be trained to give specific performance based feedback tied to mastery of the standard. Developing student friendly learning targets and giving effective feedback was one of the first steps during the turnaround process at FCTHS.

The ER staff began job embedded professional development the first month of school focusing on Stiggins (1996) work related to student friendly learning targets and standards. Jones (2009) states, “on-the-job learning is a practical method that offers an easier, more effective method to ensure that education is constantly improving” (para. 1). Brookhart (2012) highlights the importance between the target
and feedback when she says that feedback will not work if students are not trying to reach a learning target or if they do not know what the learning target is. There needs to be a clear connection between teacher feedback and the learning target so students will be able to apply the feedback to their growth (Brookhart, 2012).

Need for Feedback

According to Brookhart (2012), good feedback is timely, descriptive of the work, positive, clear and specific, and differentiated. Brookhart contends that if teachers provide good feedback during progress monitoring students gain ownership of their work and student achievement will increase. Teachers were provided professional development designed to help them understand how to give effective feedback. Once teachers understood the connection between the standard, the learning target, and the formative assessment the ER staff focused their efforts on making sure teachers were giving students effective feedback that would help the students move forward. The ER staff provided the teachers with examples of effective feedback on student assignments as well as modeled conferencing techniques.

In his research on low-performing schools, Cohen (2001) noted that some problems that low-performing high schools face are sometimes seen in wealthy suburbs or rural areas but occur most often in high-poverty urban neighborhoods. He stated (as cited in Noguera, 2004) that teachers typically relied on lecture format focusing on delivering the “content without looking for evidence of learning or mastery of knowledge and skills.” Many educators assumed that covering the content
through a lecture format was teaching the content when in reality there was no
guarantee anything was being mastered. This basically described what this researcher
observed from the beginning. Teachers were teaching the content; students were not
engaged in the learning process and the teachers did not know whether the students
had or had not mastered the content.

“One of the most powerful keys to unlocking student motivation and
perseverance is feedback” (Goodwin & Miller, 2012, p. 82). Safer and Fleischman
(2005) stated that a school’s success is measured by every student achieving at a high
level. They suggest that monitoring student progress is a practice that teachers can
use to help determine the effectiveness of their teaching and to make informed
instructional decisions. Research demonstrates that when teachers monitor student
progress “students learn more, teacher decision making improves, and students
become more aware of their own performance” (Safer & Fleischman, 2005, p. 82).
According to Goodwin and Miller (2012) the best feedback is not a score or a grade
but clear, specific guidance on how to improve. The professional experiences of this
researcher indicate that monitoring student progress and using the results of that
monitoring are essential when it comes to increasing achievement for all students.
Progress monitoring is a way to track a student’s performance towards meeting state
standards. Many teachers at FCTHS were not covering the necessary state standards
let alone monitoring individual student progress.
Monitoring Student Progress

With high stakes assessment and No Child Left Behind (NCLB), progress monitoring is receiving closer attention in education research, policy and practice. This was not the case at FCTHS. According to Wallace, Espin, McMaster, and Deno (2007), monitoring student progress was always an important part of the educational process. When the turnaround process began there was not a systematic process in place at FCTHS to monitor student progress, apparently it was not seen as an important part of the educational process. In fact, the norm was to teach content, give an assessment, and teach more content. Wallace, et al. (2007) observed that individual progress monitoring is a standard process in successful schools.

As a next step in the turnaround process, FCTHS implemented a system to monitor student progress with the English II and Algebra II teachers. The teachers identified the key standards that would be taught in each trimester and produced student friendly learning targets. Daily formative assessments were given and instructional changes were made based on what the students knew and did not know. At the six week mark, a diagnostic assessment was given based on the standards taught. Based on their assessment results, students were identified as red, yellow, and green. Each assessment contained 12 questions that assessed four different standards, three questions per standard. If a student was green on a standard he answered all four questions correct, yellow he answered two to three questions correct and red if he answered zero to one question correct.
Fuchs and Fuchs (1986) found that tracking student progress and providing teachers with graphic displays of student performance on formative assessments produced a 26 percentile gain in student achievement. Using graphic displays became a vital part of Fern Creek’s Teacher Data Day. After the six week standards based assessments were given, the English II teachers were given a release day to review assessment results. Teachers were given graphs that showed how each of their classes scored based on the red, yellow, green system by standards. Teachers could look at specific class result, specific question results, and specific student results. Based on this information the teachers then designed red, yellow, and green intervention activities. A student monitoring process and intervention system had been born at FCTHS.

The following day when the teachers returned to the classroom students charted their assessment progress on a learning target tracking form. Each student then completed red, yellow, and green intervention/enrichment standards based activities based on their assessment data. This process helped students gain ownership of their learning rather than just taking a test and receiving a grade. Students could see the connection between the learning target, the standard, and their mastery.

Milo (2007) described a five step program that was used to monitor student process called TargetTeach. The program helps administrators and teachers set goals, focus on instruction, and track student progress. TargetTeach monitors weekly student work and standardized test results and allows for teachers to break down what
students know and still need to learn. This system is much like the FCTHS's system. Fern Creek developed a standard based approach to curriculum, assessment, tracking student progress, and developing individual student interventions.

Stecker, Lembke, and Foegen (2008) took the monitoring process even further and stated that successful school districts use assessment data to monitor the success of instructional programs and classroom teachers use assessment data to determine student strength and weaknesses. The researchers conducted a study and the subject 9-year-old student with a disability in reading. Once the teacher started using a curriculum based monitoring system to track student progress the teacher was able to learn what the student knew and did not know. Based on the progress monitoring data, the teachers made instructional decisions that focused on reteaching the curriculum the student did not know, and setting short and long term goals for increased achievement.

The results of this capstone suggest that progress monitoring is key to increasing student achievement however disadvantages can be noted. According to Shinn (1998) the problem with progress monitoring is not the lack of teacher interest or motivation but the lack of training for teachers on how to effectively use formative assessments to monitor progress.

**Students Track Their Progress**

After the six week assessments were given, each student received their results and a standard tracking sheet they could use to track their progress by standard and
the red, yellow, green system. When the students received their results, this researcher observed a noticeable difference in student behavior compared to receiving a test with a grade on it and putting it away. Students began to demonstrate an ownership of their work and the learning process. Students used the standard tracking sheet to determine if they were red, yellow, or green in each standard. They marked their individual progress on each standard and then began the intervention activities on the standards they had not mastered. Because of the standard tracking process, students knew what they had mastered and were motivated to master their red and yellow standards. Marzano (2009) stated that on “average the practice of having students track their own progress was associated with a 32 percentile point gain in their achievement” (p. 86). Marzano concluded that having students track their progress is a hidden gem. The observation of this researcher related to student tracking their own progress affirms Marzano’s conclusions.

Interventions One Step Further

Given the importance of frequent monitoring of student work, the ER team in collaboration with the leadership at FCTHS, sought to implement the most effective monitoring process possible. According to Jung and Swan (2011) the largest increases in student achievement come when individual student progress is occurring and intervention plans are being developed based on individual student needs. Jung and Swan (2011) discussed not only the value of progress monitoring but the importance of an intervention plan. The intervention plan Juan and Swan (2011) explained had five crucial features: measurable outcomes, clearly defined interventions, data
collection system, visual representation of data, and web-based platform. Having an intervention plan helped implement efficient progress monitoring and better instructional decisions (Jung & Swan, 2011). The features of the intervention plan allowed for a measurable go to be in place with student specific interventions in mind to help reach the goal. The plan also included collecting the data and sharing it visually with teachers and students.

Teachers at FCTHS began to look at data during Data Days and PLCs and realized that some students needed additional intervention time than what was provided with the red, yellow, and green lessons during regular class time. That is when the T.I.P. was created. T.I.P was offered during the school day and after school two days a week. Students were given a ticket, for public transportation, if they needed transportation home. T.I.P. was different than any other after school program because each child had a specific intervention plan based on the Kentucky Core Academic Standards (KCAS) and the red, yellow, green intervention system. Students attended T.I.P. sessions until they were green on a standard or demonstrated mastery.

At the end of the school day, students reported to the appropriate T.I.P. content classroom based on their assessment results. Students received individual interventions based on their progress towards the standards and then were responsible for tracking their own progress.

In his research related to classroom assessment, Guskey (2003) states that teachers must change both their view of assessments and their implementation of
results. Guskey contends that assessments must be an integral part of the instruction and seen as a crucial piece to helping students learn. Teachers need to make assessments useful for students, teachers, and provide corrective instruction when needed. This describes what FCHTS sought to accomplish throughout their turnaround journey. Teachers using assessment data to drive instructional changes and develop interventions were the goal.

Due to NCLB focusing on reading and math results, the ER staff developed a systematic approach, using data to drive instruction, with English II and Algebra II teachers that focused on using assessment results to make instructional changes and design individual interventions plans. This system was shared with all end-of-course assessment teachers towards the end of year one of turnaround and grew into a school wide process for year two of turnaround. English II and Algebra II teachers as well as the ER staff modeled the system to the other content teachers as the process became school wide.

Implementation

On a Sunday evening in July 2010, the Educational Recovery Team met the Principal at a local Tex-Mex restaurant for a “get to know you dinner” before attending an intensive 10 day turnaround training that started the next morning. It was hoped that the conversation at dinner would begin to create a results driven team.

The members of the Educational Recovery Staff had never worked together before. Each member brought different educational experiences to the team. The Educational Recovery Leader had served as a high school English teacher, a building
administrator, an Instructional Supervisor, and an Educational Recovery Leader. The
literacy ERS had served as a music teacher and building administrator. The math
ERS had served as a middle school math teacher and an Educational Recovery
Specialist.

Over casual conversation which included questions concerning career
experiences it was obvious that the Principal was not quite sure what he was facing
and how the three people sitting across the table from him were going to be able to
help him keep his job and get the media off his back. Yes, it should be noted that in
the beginning not everyone was truly focused on student achievement or was selfless
enough to help all students achieve regardless of the cost. The Principal was more
concerned about the stigma of being labeled a PLA school.

Personnel with KDE organized turnaround training for 10 days. The 10 PLA
schools from across the state each brought a turnaround team (principal, math and
reading teacher/resource person) that worked with the assigned ER team during the
turnaround training. The training was intense and the stakes were high. The
Principal could be removed from his position if student achievement did not increase
during the turnaround process. KDE brought in Dr. Joseph Murphy from Vanderbilt
University to discuss school turnaround and the importance of having three focus
areas. Dr. Murphy referred to these three focus areas as the “three big rocks”. Once
developed, the three big rocks guided the development of a 30-60-90 day plan that the
ER team used during the turnaround work. The daily training sessions focused on
closing academic achievement gaps, research on school turnaround, school culture,
and how to have data driven conversations with teachers who were not on board with school turnaround.

As the Educational Recovery Team began working with the school leadership team, the first task at hand was to identify the big rocks, or key focus areas, based on the results of the leadership assessment that helped drive the turnaround process. The concept of having three big rocks to focus on daily would help keep the leadership team focused on the highest priorities leading to increased student achievement.

Professional Learning Communities, College and Career Readiness, and Monitoring of Student Data/Targeted Interventions were identified as the three big rocks of school turnaround. These three rocks were chosen because FCTHS did not have a culture of collaboration amongst the staff, student data were not being used to make instructional changes and college and career readiness for all was the goal for all Kentucky students. The ER team believed that the key to increasing student achievement was having a laser focus on the big rocks. In his work *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* Covey (1989) observed that: “The key is not to prioritize what’s on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities” (p. 161). The three big rocks became part of the school’s culture and were constantly monitored through the use of a 30-60-90 day plan. A 30-60-90 day plan is one in which strategies are identified to reach the goals of each big rock as well as a point person to implement each strategy. This format was chosen because it allowed the ERL to track turnaround efforts weekly leading up to each 30-60-90 day check as well as tracking the school’s leadership’s individual progress in the turnaround effort.
Each member of the ER Staff had previously experienced working in low performing schools so it was understood that working conditions wouldn’t be lavish and that data driven conversations would have to occur on a regular basis to make improvements happen. The three team ER staff was given a work space which most would describe as a small walk-in closet far from the action of the building or the principal. Members of the ER team interpreted this to mean that the school leadership did not value the opinion of the ER staff.

The need to turnaround this school was critical, not only to the long term impact on students, but also due to the fact that FCTHS had received the Federal Title I School Improvement Grant to support the various initiatives identified in the grant application. The school chose the turnaround model where half of the staff had been replaced and the principal’s job was on the line. This was the first time the Kentucky Department of Education had put a team of three ER staff members into a turnaround school. The school had received $1,311,849 of SIG money over a three year period. Increased levels of student achievement were expected.

Having a three member ER team allowed the ERL to work directly with the building principal and the ERSs worked directly with reading and math teachers. The SIG money that was received was spent on additional reading and math teachers and permanent substitute teachers that were used to provide daily interventions to students. This funding also covered the cost of hiring additional substitute teachers so that teachers could participate in job embedded professional development and Data
Days. During Data Days teachers reviewed student data, determined instructional next steps, and developed interventions based on the data.

The ER staff used the weeks before school started to organize materials, review data, and develop a 30 day plan that included a number of specific activities and deadlines within those 30 days. As the weeks passed and the start of school approached, members of the ER team noted a lack of teacher presence in the building. It seemed obvious that teachers were not coming back to work in their classrooms or prepare for the start of school until they were required by the contract to do so nor were they coming back before they were going to get paid. For the ER team this was an eye opening experience that showed just how powerful the teacher contract was and the teachers' actions seemed to indicate that the focus was on teachers' needs rather than students' needs.

Once the school year started, the ER team began to uncover issues in the school besides low student performance. In organizing an Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) the Principal identified too many people to serve. The ILT met every Monday at 9:00 a.m. The meetings tended to focus on managerial issues and not on curriculum and instruction. Most of the weekly meetings lasted close to two hours.

During the first semester tension between the principal and the ERL were evidenced during one meeting early in the school year as personnel issues were discussed, and there were some people sitting at the table who did not need to be part of a personnel discussion. Because of this issue, the ERL sent an email to the principal and the assistant principals reviewing the importance of confidentiality and
personnel issues. This caused the principal’s pent-up frustrations to surface and prompted him to say, “There is only room for one principal in this building.” The ERL recognized the fact that the Principal still had trust issues and spoke with him privately in order to strengthen the relationship.

After Monitoring Student Data/Targeted Interventions was identified as a big rock, the turnaround team began designing a systematic approach with English II and Algebra II teachers to analyze individual student data and use this analysis to make instructional changes. Common assessments were designed first and each question was tied to a specific standard. Data Days were implemented that gave teachers time to look at assessment results. During a Data Day, teachers examined assessment results and determined which standards their students had mastered and which they had not. This standard based approach to teaching and assessing allowed teachers to understand what their students knew and did not know. The second part of the Data Day gave teachers time to design individual intervention systems to help meet individual student needs. FCTHS developed a red, yellow, green intervention system that gave individual interventions based on how the student scored on the assessment.

By implementing a systematic approach to monitor student data, instructional adjustments were able to be made and interventions were designed. As a part of this intentional implementation, this researcher observed a change in the academic culture at FCTHS. The development of the monitoring student data process was a collaborative effort between the ER staff, administration, and teachers. Once Algebra II and English II teachers embedded the student monitoring process, the ER staff
began to share this process with other departments. English II and Algebra II teachers modeled the process to teachers in other content areas. By the beginning of the second year of turnaround, this systematic approach of monitoring student progress was implemented into all the core classes. During the 2011-2012 school year, all departments practice this monitoring process.

By the end of the 2010-2011 academic year, the school leadership recognized that the ER team was dedicated to improving student achievement and that the ERL was truly invested in developing the leadership skills of the principal and the future success of the school. Over a matter of a few months the building principal had gone from appearing not to be interested in the opinion of the ER staff to having complete buy in of the turnaround process and wanting to seek the approval of the ERL. At the end of the first year of turnaround, the principal moved the ER staff to an office next to the data room and the Office of Teacher Support. An intentional collaboration had been formed.
Results

FCTHS began its turnaround journey in July of 2010. From the beginning various data points were tracked. During the 2010-2011 school year, the key data point was the percentage of students scoring proficient on the reading and math assessments tied to NCLB goals. As shown in Table 6, the percentage of students scoring proficient in reading increased from 57.23% in 2010 to 66.85% in 2011. Each subgroup also showed a growth in proficiency on the reading assessment: White 66% in 2010 to 78% in 2011, African American 42% in 2010 to 46% in 2011, and free/reduced 49% in 2010 to 60% in 2011. The increases in proficiency allowed FCTHS to meet the reading Annual Measurable Objective (AMO) goal for NCLB in the subcategories of All Students and White Students. Safe Harbor, reducing the total number of students or subpopulation that scored below proficient by at least 10%, was met in the Free/Reduced subcategory (Kentucky Department of Education, 2011b).
Table 6

*Fern Creek Traditional High School Reading NCLB Results*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>2009-2010 FCTHS % Proficient</th>
<th>2009-2010 AMO% Proficient</th>
<th>2010-2011 FCTHS % Proficient</th>
<th>2010-2011 AMO% Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>57.23%</td>
<td>59.63%</td>
<td>66.85%</td>
<td>69.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>66.67%</td>
<td>59.63%</td>
<td>78.31%</td>
<td>69.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>42.15%</td>
<td>59.63%</td>
<td>46.85%</td>
<td>69.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free/Reduced</td>
<td>49.44%</td>
<td>59.63%</td>
<td>60.22%</td>
<td>69.72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from Kentucky Department of Education School Report Card (2011b).

As shown in Table 7, the percentage of student’s scoring proficient on the math assessment increased from 31.42% in 2010 to 53.47% in 2011. Each subgroup also showed a growth in proficiency on the math assessment: White 39% in 2010 to 65% in 2011, African American 18% in 2010 to 33% in 2011, and free/reduced 26% in 2010 to 43% in 2011. The increases in proficiency led to FCTHS reaching the math AMO goal for NCLB in the subcategory of White Students. Safe Harbor was met in the All Student, African American, and Free/Reduced category (Kentucky Department of Education, 2011b).
Table 7

_Fern Creek Traditional High School Math NCLB Results_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>2009-2010</th>
<th></th>
<th>2010-2011</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FCTHS %</td>
<td>AMO%</td>
<td>FCTHS %</td>
<td>AMO%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Students</td>
<td>31.42%</td>
<td>59.88%</td>
<td>53.47%</td>
<td>69.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>59.88%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>69.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>59.88%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>69.91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free/Reduced</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>59.88%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>69.91%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from Kentucky Department of Education School Report Card (2011b).

One of the key data points for year two of turnaround was ACT scores. The English, reading and math ACT tests accounted for 20% Kentucky’s Accountability System for the 2011-2012 school year. The increased ACT scores from March 2011 (year one of turnaround) to March 2012 (year two of turnaround) are presented in Table 8 (Kentucky Department of Education, 2012b).
Table 8

*Fern Creek Traditional High School ACT Data*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>March 2011</th>
<th>March 2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>16.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composite</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from Kentucky Department of Education School Report Card (2012b).

During the 2011-2012 school year (second year of turnaround), the Kentucky Assessment System changed and high schools were required to start teaching the KCAS in reading and math, and students would take the Quality Core End of Course Assessment. Due to these changes new AMO goals were established for NCLB accountability purposes. As illustrated in Table 9 and Table 10, FCTHS met the AMO goals for all subcategories in reading and math for the first time since the creation of NCLB (Kentucky Department of Education, 2012b).
Table 9

*Fern Creek Traditional High School Reading NCLB Results Under New Accountability System*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading 2011-2012</th>
<th>FCTHS % Proficient</th>
<th>AMO % Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All students</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
<td>37.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>57.8%</td>
<td>39.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free/Reduced</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With Disability</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from Kentucky Department of Education School Report Card (2012b).

Table 10

*Fern Creek Traditional High School Math NCLB Results Under New Accountability*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Math 2011-2012</th>
<th>FCTHS % Proficient</th>
<th>AMO % Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All students</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
<td>21.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>56.2%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free/Reduced</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Adapted from Kentucky Department of Education School Report Card (2012b).
Another part of the new accountability system dealt with student growth from the English, math and reading PLAN assessments given in September of the 10th grade and the English, math, and reading ACT assessments given in March of the 11th grade. A two-percentage point increase is considered normal growth by ACT. Each category in Table 11 exceeds two percentage points (Kentucky Department of Education, 2012b).

Table 11

_Fern Creek Traditional ACT PLAN/ACT Growth_  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Composite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACT Plan</td>
<td>14.13</td>
<td>15.49</td>
<td>15.05</td>
<td>15.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>16.66</td>
<td>17.91</td>
<td>18.06</td>
<td>17.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Growth</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Note._ Adapted from Kentucky Department of Education School Report Card (2011).

**Findings and Conclusions**

Based on this researcher’s experiences that began in 2010 and spanned nearly 3 years, FCTHS’s turnaround process has been a tough journey but one that demonstrates a number of positive outcomes for students, teachers, and administrators. The percentage of students scoring proficient in reading has increased almost 10% from 2010 to 2012 and the percent of students scoring proficient in math has increased 22% from 2010 to 2012. ACT scores have increased and the percentage of student’s meeting the college and career readiness benchmarks have
increased from 19% in 2010 to 39% in 2012. Currently for the 2013 school year FCTHS has already reached this year’s CCR goal of 43% without figuring in any additional bonus points that will be awarded by KDE at the end of the school year. Additional students will be meeting CCR benchmarks over the next few months and the leadership team has set a personal school goal of having 50% CCR rate by June 1st. On February 7th, 2012 the Kentucky Department of Education released a report showing the progress of Kentucky’s 41 priority schools. Of the 18 Priority Schools in Jefferson County FCTHS was one of the two schools that are progressing based on the Commissioner’s turnaround rubric. There was only one priority school from cohort one priority schools, which is made up of high schools across the state that scored one point higher than FCTHS on the Commissioner’s turnaround rubric (Kentucky Department of Education, 2013). It should be noted that the FCTHS growth in student achievement aligns with the implementation of practices designed to turn the school around including collaboration amongst staff, focusing on three big rocks, and the frequent monitoring of student data.

Building principals that are trying to increase student achievement will benefit by implementing a systematic approach of monitoring student data. Knowing where the students were and where they needed to go helped FCTHS improve the quality of instruction and increase student achievement. Frequently monitoring student data also helped students develop ownership of their own progress.

The ER team grew professionally throughout this turnaround process by learning how to better help struggling teachers with content knowledge and teaching
strategies. The ER team recommends that a clear plan be developed when trying to improve a school and the plan needs to be monitored regularly throughout the process.
ONE SCHOOLS TURNAROUND JOURNEY

TURNAROUND COURSE FOR PRACTICING AND INSPIRING LEADERS
Connection Between the Capstone and the Turnaround Course

The turnaround course is designed to provide school administrators with the resources and intentional focus needed to begin the school turnaround process. This course is designed around three big rocks: transformational leadership/skills and disposition, systems thinking, and curriculum, instruction and assessment.

Many of the training resources that the ER specialist receives from KDE are embedded in the 18 week turnaround course. Also infused throughout the 18 week course are the experiences described within the case study based on nearly three years’ worth of work in one low performing school in an urban setting in Kentucky. These experiences helped to intentionally develop the topics of the turnaround course. There is a correlation between the strategies embedded in the turnaround course and the student achievement growth at FCTHS.
COURSE TITLE: School Turnaround in Kentucky Course I

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course is designed to provide school administrators with the resources and the intentional focus needed to begin the school turnaround process. The course is designed around three big rocks: transformational leadership/skills and disposition, systems thinking, and curriculum, instruction and the assessment tools needed to begin the turnaround process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Topic: Unbridled Learning Accountability Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Kentucky Department of Education Focus Areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• College and Career Readiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Closing Gaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Growth for All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Proficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Graduation Rate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kentucky has recently developed a new accountability system to meet the requirements of SB1. What does this accountability system look like at all grade levels? What resources are available for me to share with my faculty, parents, and students during the transition period? How will I develop a system to ensure that the information that is most critical to this process is understood to the point of application? How will I know?

Student Learner Outcomes: Students will demonstrate a working knowledge of the Unbridled Learning Accountability Model.

Pre-Reading: Read the white paper *Unbridled Learning Accountability Model*. Be able to identify and explain the five areas of the model.

Class Activity: Students will work in teams of 2-3. Each team will review a specific focus area (College and Career Readiness, Closing Gaps, Growth for All, Proficiency, Graduation Rate) of the new accountability system and be prepared to share their findings.

Application: Use the Kentucky Department of Education website and the white paper as a resource to develop an Unbridled Learning guide for parents, teachers, and students. The guide should be user friendly and explain each accountability area for the elementary, middle and high school.
Week 2  
**Topic:** Fixed or Growth Mindset

Do you believe that all students can learn? How can you promote student growth over time to teachers, parents, and students? Do you have a growth mindset or a fixed mindset? How can you use the growth mindset to improve student performance? How will you ensure that a growth mindset becomes a part of your school or system?

**Student Learner Outcome:** Students will compare and contrast fixed and growth mindset.

**Pre-Reading:** Read the 3 articles about fixed and growth mindset. Prepare a summary (3-5 pages in length) of the articles that includes your personal thoughts or experiences concerning fixed and growth mindset as well as the key points from the articles.

**Class Activity:** Chart out the characteristics of fixed and growth mindset

**Application:** Prepare a professional development activity that introduces fixed and growth mindset to your faculty and allows the faculty to develop a school plan to move the culture to a growth mindset.

**Articles**

Week 3  
**Topic:** Kentucky’s New Accountability System

- Elementary, Middle, High
- Reporting of Results through New School Report Card

Steps to effectively use KPREP data to analyze test scores, identify gap areas, and develop strategies to increase student achievement. What kind of sustainable processes will you put in place to ensure that the strategies are applied consistently? How will you know the processes are effective? How often will you monitor and report and to whom?

**Student Learner Outcomes:** Students will analyze gap areas from the school report card and determine next steps.
Pre-Reading: Review KY's new report card on KDE's webpage and be prepared to answer questions about the design and where to find specific data information.

Class Activity: Review your schools report card and complete the goal calculator.

Application: Identify the gaps in your school based on the data found in the report card. Develop strategies that will help close the gaps and increase student achievement. How will you communicate this plan to your staff? How will you ensure this plan is implemented and is actually closing the gaps?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 4</th>
<th>S&amp;D/TL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Topic:** Professional Growth Effectiveness System (PGES)  
- Growing Teachers Instead of Evaluating Teachers |
| *How to use principal observations, peer observations, and student growth to improve teacher efficacy. Building the process to make it work for all stakeholders?* |
| **Student Learner Outcomes:** Students will demonstrate a working knowledge of the Professional Growth and Effectiveness System. |
| **Pre-Reading:** Read the three articles about teacher evaluation. Prepare a summary of the articles and share your thoughts on how to move from teacher evaluation to teacher effectiveness in your school. |
| **Class Activity:** The class will be divided into four groups. Each group will jigsaw one of Danielson's four domains and its components and then present to the entire group. |
| **Application:** Develop an implementation plan to rollout the PGES system in your school. Be sure to explain how you plan to educate your teachers about each part of PGES and handle the student growth piece of the system. |

**Articles**
| Week 5 | Topic: Importance of 3 Big Rocks in School Turnaround-Dr. Joseph Murphy  
How do I improve my school? Where do I look to know which steps to take towards school improvement? How to identify focus areas for school improvement? How will I build a system that I can hardwire to ensure sustainability?  
Student Learner Outcomes: Students will analyze data to identify areas of focus.  
Pre-Reading: Read the article about the importance of having three big rocks in school turnaround and planning.  
Class Activity: Review your current CSIP, the KPrep data which can be found in the new school report, and the TELL survey data. Application: Based on your findings from the data review completed in class identify the three big rocks for your school to build a school improvement plan around.  
Articles  
|---|---|
| Week 6 | Topic: Development of 30-60-90 Plan based on 3 Big Rocks  
How to develop a strategic school improvement plan that focuses on the 3 big rocks for school improvement. How to determine the point person for each big rock? How to monitor the implementation of the plan.  
Student Learner Outcomes: Students will develop a school improvement plan based on analyzed data and the seven strands of school improvement.  
Pre-Reading: Watch the video about developing a 30-60-90 day plan and review the attached power point. Keep the three big rocks you identified last week in mind when reviewing these materials.  
Class Activity: The video you watched discussed the seven significant strands of school improvement. Review the seven strands of school improvement and identify next steps and key players in your building for each step. |
### Application:
Develop a 30-60-90 day plan around your three big rocks and the seven strands of school improvement.

#### Week 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Topic:</strong> Systems Thinking-Jim Shipley</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Linkage Charts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- PDSA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Plus Delta</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*How do I identify areas that need a systematic approach in order for improvement to occur? How do I measure the effectiveness of systems and plan next steps?*

**Student Learner Outcomes:** Students will demonstrate a working knowledge of a linkage chart.

**Pre-Reading:** Read the articles about the Baldrige Program and system thinking in education. Prepare a summary of the articles and share your thoughts about one successful or failing system in your school.

**Class Activity:** Students will be divided into teams of 2-3. Each team will review the following documents: linkage charts, PDSA, and Plus Delta.

**Application:** Complete the linkage chart based on your role as a principal.

**Articles**


### Week 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Topic:</strong> Classroom <strong>Assessments</strong> for Student Learning-Stiggins</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Formative Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Summative Assessment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*What is assessment? How do I use assessment results to drive daily
instruction and increase student growth? How do I create processes in my system to ensure fidelity of implementation?

**Student Learner Outcomes:** Students will demonstrate a working knowledge of formative and summative assessment.

**Pre-Reading:** Read the articles about classroom assessment. As you read each article, highlight information that you found new or interesting about assessment. Be prepared to discuss the articles.

**Class Activity:** Read Chapters 1 and 2 of *Classroom Assessment for Student Learning Doing It Right and Using It Well*. Complete the Assessment Competencies for School Leaders (Page 198 *Assessment Balance and Quality An Action Guide for School Leaders*).

**Application:** Using the resources from both texts, prepare a job embedded professional development that introduces formative and summative assessment to your faculty.

**Articles**

**Week 9 CIA**

**Topic:** Development of Formative and Summative Assessments
*What is the difference between formative and summative assessment? Why does it matter which type of assessment I use? How to monitor the effectiveness of assessments?*

**Student Learner Outcomes:** Students will develop a school-wide assessment plan that supports formative and summative assessment throughout the school year.

**Pre-Reading:** Read Chapters 3 and 4 of *Classroom Assessment for Student Learning Doing It Right and Using It Well* (CASL). Read the three articles below and write a summary explaining how formative assessment was used in the articles.

**Class Activity:** Using an assessment that is being used in your school, complete Activity 3.11 Critique an Assessment for Clear Targets in your
**CASL book.**

**Application:** Develop a school wide assessment plan that embeds formative and summative assessment throughout the school year.

**Articles**

| Week 10 | **CIA** | **Topic:** Professional Learning Communities-DuFour  
- What Is a PLC and How Does it Work?  

*Is PLC just a buzz word or does it really work? Is there a PLC model I should follow in my school?*

**Student Learner Outcomes:** Students will analyze and explain the implementation level of the PLCs in the building.

**Pre-Reading:** Read the articles about professional learning communities. Summarize the articles and identify characteristics that are key parts of successful PLCs.

**Class Activity:** Read Chapters 1 and 2 of *Learning by Doing*. Complete “A Data Picture of Our School” on pages 24 and 25.

**Application:** A key factor in having successful PLCs is recognizing where your PLCs are in development and/or sustainability. Complete “PLC Laying the Foundation” on pages 44-46. Be honest in where you rank each indicator based on your current PLC system.

**Articles**

| Week 11 | **CIA** | **Topic:** Professional Learning Communities  
- How to Build PLCs in My Building |
### What steps should be taken to build a PLC? What should my PLC look like? Who should be in my PLC?

**Student Learner Outcomes:** Students will demonstrate a working knowledge of systems and sustainable PLCs.

**Pre-Reading:** Read the articles about PLCs and prepare a summary that includes critical steps for PLC development.

**Class Activity:** Based on the pre-reading article *A Principals Role in PLC Development*. Create a PLC implementation plan that could be used in your building to improve the current PLC structure.

**Application:** Read the case study in Chapter 3 of *Learning by Doing*. Develop a job embedded PD session based around this case study. Use this case study to show how systems work can be used to build sustainable PLCs.

**Articles**

| Week 12 | Topic: Professional Learning Communities  
|         | • Using Data to Drive Instruction and Interventions through PLCs  

*How can data be used in PLCs? Where do I get the data? How can you use data in PLCs to change instructional practices and develop interventions? Tools for PLC success...agendas, minutes, protocol, engagement for responsibility, etc.*

**Student Learner Outcomes:** Students will develop a job embedded PD session that focuses on cultivating a collaborative culture in the building and in PLCs.

**Pre-Reading:** Reading the articles about using data in PLC work. Prepare a summary and be sure to give specific examples of how data can be used in PLC work.

**Class Activity:** Read the case study in Chapter 4 of *Learning by Doing*. Design a school intervention plan that is built around the PLC structure you developed previously.
### Week 13 CIA

**Application:** Read the case studies in Chapter 5 and 6 of *Learning by Doing*. Think about why it is important to build a collaborative culture in your building and in your PLCs. Use the case study as a reference to build a job embedded PD session that highlights the importance of a collaborative culture and how to ensure one exists in your school and PLCs.

**Articles**

**Topic:** Progress Monitoring Outside of Formative Assessment

*How can I effectively use progress monitoring over time to measure student growth? How can I develop a school-wide progress monitoring system?*

**Student Learner Outcomes:** Students will design a school wide data monitoring system based around PLC work.

**Pre-Reading:** Read the articles about progress monitoring. Pick one article and prepare a summary using Prezi.

**Class Activity:** Read the case study in Chapter 7 of *Learning by Doing*. Based on the information in the chapter outline steps for developing a school wide progress monitoring system around a PLC structure.

**Application:** Design a school wide data monitor system based around PLC work. Be sure to include the monitoring of summative and formative assessments as well as how students will monitor their own progress.

**Articles**
### Week 14

**Topic:** Getting Everyone on Board with the Common Core  
*What are the Common Core Standards? Which ones do I teach in my classroom? How can I use standards to monitor student growth?*

**Student Learner Outcomes:** Students will design a school wide plan to implement the Common Core Standards in all content areas.

**Pre-Reading:** Read the articles about the Common Core Standards.

**Class Activity:** Create a Venn Diagram based on your knowledge of the Common Core and Core Content 4.1.

**Application:** Design a school wide plan to implement the Common Core Standards in all content areas. Include a timeline and specific professional development strategies for non-reading and math students.

**Articles**


### Week 15

**Topic:** Interventions to Close the Gap  
- Targeted Intervention Programs  
- Intervention during Daily Instruction  

*What data do I use to identify gaps? How do I close gaps? What is an intervention and how do I build intervention systems that will help increase student achievement?*

**Student Learner Outcomes:** Students will develop a school wide plan and monitoring system to address the current gap areas.

**Pre-Reading:** Read the articles about closing gaps and intervention programs. Prepare a summary of the articles and be prepared to discuss.

**Class Activity:** Read Chapter 1 and 2 of Raising the Bar and Closing the Gap. As you read these chapters think about the culture and teachers in your building.
**Application:** Use the school report card to identify the gaps in the student performance data. Based on the knowledge you've gained from the readings develop a plan to share the gap information with your staff and next steps to address the gap areas. Be sure your plan includes an ongoing monitoring system.

**Articles**

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<th>Week 16</th>
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| **Topic:** Using EPAS to Become College and Career Ready  
*What does EPAS stand for? What does it mean to be college and career ready? How can I use EPAS data to drive instructional changes?*

**Student Learner Outcomes:** Students will develop a professional development workshop focusing on the importance of College and Career Readiness in Kentucky's accountability system.

**Pre-Reading:** Search the internet to find information on EPAS. Focus on the following questions and be ready to share with the class. What does EPAS stand for? What content areas and grade levels are included in the EPAS system?

**Class Activity:** Read the following documents: *College Career Readiness Chart, College Career Readiness Delivery Plan,* and *Connecting College Readiness to the Classroom.*

**Application:** Develop a professional development workshop to share with your staff that focuses on the importance of College and Career Readiness in Kentucky's Accountability System. Make sure to highlight the importance of the EPAS system over time and how it can guide instruction and interventions.

**Resources**
ACT's Connecting College Readiness Standards to the Classroom  
KDE’s College and Career Readiness Delivery Plan  
College and Career Readiness for All Chart

| Week 17 | Topic: Job Embedded Professional Development |
What is job embedded professional development? When does it happen and what does it cover? How can job embedded professional development improve instruction and increase student achievement?

Student Learner Outcomes: Students will design a job embedded professional development plan that will build capacity and increase student achievement.

Pre-Reading: Review your current professional development plan. Does your current plan address any of the gap areas found in your recent school report card? Be prepared to discuss which gap areas are addressed and which ones are not.

Class Activity: Read the following documents: Beyond Job Embedded PD, Characteristics of Effective PD, High Quality PD, and Job Embedded PD. After reading these documents and based on your own personal experience create a list of characteristics of effective PD.

Application: Identify teacher leaders in your building. Develop a job embedded PD plan with the teacher leader team. The plan should include a schedule, topics and presenters for each job embedded PD session build around achievement gaps and school improvement goals.

Resources
National Institute for Excellence in Teaching Job Embedded Ensuring that Good Professional Development Gets Results
National Comprehensive Center for Teaching Quality High Quality Professional Development for All Teachers: Effectively Allocating Resources
Job-Embedded Professional Development What It Is, Whose Responsible, and How to get It Done Well.

Week 18
S&D/TL

Topic: The Importance of Building Teacher Leader Capacity
Are there teacher leaders in my building that I'm not aware of? Am I using all my resources in the right places? Are there diamonds in the rough that need to be discovered? What do I need to do to build teacher capacity?

Student Learner Outcomes: Students will create a leadership development plan that targets current teacher leaders and teachers that need to grow into teacher leaders.

Pre-Reading: Read the following articles that address leadership A
**Framework for Shared Leadership and Coaches as System Leaders.**
Create a chart that lists the teacher leaders in your building and the roles and responsibilities that make you see them as a teacher leader.

**Class Activity:** Read the following articles about leadership *Helping Adults Learn, Leadership Development,* and *The Outside Inside Connection.* Team up with a partner and be prepared to discuss the key points of the articles.

**Application:** Using the chart that you created in the Pre-Reading activity develop a leadership development plan for your school. Your current teacher leaders need to be included as well as teachers you want to target to develop their leadership skills. The plan should indicate what areas of leadership each teacher should focus on and how building this leadership capacity will help increase student achievement.

**Articles**

**Required Textbooks**


Other Resources


Reference Lists

Executive Summary References


**References for Capstone**


Appendix

Resources for capstone courses are included with the CD that accompanies the printed portion of this capstone project.
VITA

KELLY A. FOSTER

Date of Birth: April 12, 1974

Place of Birth: Lexington, KY

EDUCATION

May, 1996 Bachelor of Arts
Eastern Kentucky University
Richmond, KY

May, 1998 Master of Arts
Eastern Kentucky University
Richmond, KY

May, 2000 Masters of Arts in School Administration
Morehead State University
Morehead, KY

Pending Doctor of Education
Morehead State University
Morehead, KY

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

1996-1997 English Language Arts Teacher
Madison County Schools
Richmond, KY

1997-1999 English Teacher
Montgomery County Schools
Mt. Sterling, KY

1999-2005 Assistant Principal
Nicholas County Schools
Carlisle, KY

2005-2009 Director of Instruction
Montgomery County Schools
Mt. Sterling, KY

2009-Present

Educational Recovery Leader
Kentucky Department of Education
Frankfort, KY