Is there a professional learning community at your school?

- We have been working in true professional learning communities for the past four years.

- Our PD time is spent in teacher-directed study group cycles either around a common topic or focused on common students.

- Our department meetings are often focused on sharing best practices among our colleagues.

- We have excellent informal collaboration among teachers that raises the level of instruction tremendously.
How is trust important to the ways that adults work together in your department?

- There is a culture where teachers feel comfortable sharing their challenges and strategizing on these together.
- This is fostered through a long history of case management meetings where teams examine struggling students together.
- This is also fostered through a history of PD where teachers share best practices and how they have overcome instructional challenges.
Was there a key event or strategy that led you to improve instructional practice?

- During the 07-08 school year, we recognized the need to intervene with struggling students in the 10th grade prior to state assessments.
- We identified a target population of tenth graders for intervention.
- We used an initial assessment from BPE (Boston Plan for Excellence) to identify struggling students.
- Teachers amended the list of students the data identified based on classroom experience and attendance.
Was there a key event or strategy that led you to improve instructional practice?

- Our literacy coach and content teacher leader provided professional development to teachers on how to support the target group in the classroom.

- Administrators did outreach to families of the target group.

- After school tutoring was provided for the target group with the same teachers they had in the classroom.
Was there a key event or strategy that led you to improve instructional practice?

- Administrators monitored after school attendance and motivation.
- Students were asked to treat the after school intervention as a job and were given a stipend.
- Teachers assessed targeted students continually with the FAST-R assessment from BPE.
- Our literacy coach and content teachers leader met with teachers to interpret the data and plan instruction.
What supports did teachers get to improve instructional pedagogy?

- The BPE (Boston Plan for Excellence) created seven category types to break down the questions on the MCAS into different types of thinking—Finding Evidence 1 and 2 and Making Inferences 1-5.

- The literacy coach and content teacher leader provided PD on these question types and how to provide targeted lessons to help students with these thinking skills.
What changes helped motivate teachers to be more persistent in helping students to learn?

- Teachers had a voice in which students were chosen for the intervention.
- Teachers opinions on how to implement the intervention were valued.
- Teachers worked together to share strategies and challenge and support one another.
- Teachers felt accountable to the students and helping them to improve.
Describe instructional leadership in your English department.

- Our Assistant Headmaster, Joyce Campbell, is the head of the English department and she has a strong background in reading and ELA. She currently co-teaches the AP English class as well.

- Our content teacher leader, Karen Coyle Aylward, has taught in the school for ten years and has a reduced course load to work with teachers on PD and planning for instruction.

- Our literacy coach, Elisa MacDonald, conducts CCLs and other PD to support teachers in all content areas with including literacy across the curriculum.
Describe instructional leadership in your English department.

- All three instructional leaders plan professional development together.
- There are many teachers in the department serving in other formal teacher leadership roles in the school and informal leadership roles as well.
- All teachers can go to any of the instructional leaders for classroom support or they can go to one another as well.
How do you and your colleagues use data on student performance?

- In addition to MCAS and FAST-R data, we use the CLI or Composite Learning Index (created by BPE) on our incoming ninth graders to begin to target students.

- This is rating of students based on a number of factors of their schooling prior to high school (attendance, suspensions, repeated grades, test scores, age, special ed or bilingual code, etc.). Scores are then used to target needy students in their freshman year for after school support.
What are some lessons we learned?

- In the past we met in teacher-led study groups to create academic interventions for the most needy 25% of the school population.

- Through teacher feedback, we realized an academic intervention was not matched to their needs (poor attendance, etc.) and so we focused our INSTRUCTIONAL intervention on our students who were “on the bubble” or closer to passing and matched other interventions to our neediest students.