

# Cascades School District Case Study

By  
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The screening of the student oral history documentary in Nick Johnson's U.S. History classroom was just beginning. An audience of teachers, administrators, and community members sat at tables facing a laptop, projector, and screen. Bottles of water and small bags of chips were spread out on a table behind them. Two students move to the front of the room to begin.

Marita: Welcome and thank you for coming to the screening of the U.S. History class documentary.

Fredo: The documentaries you'll see today are 100 percent shot and edited by students. We chose these topics because we believe that these topics are important to the development of Cascades City.

Marita: We chose to do this documentary because it was a creative way to show what we learned.

Fredo: Currently we're in process of doing one documentary, but today you'll see multiple pieces of it.

Marita: We'll answer questions after the show. Thank you very much.

The first of four video segments addresses the topic of business in Cascades City, primarily the replacement of Cascades Mall with Cascades Towne Center (the old mall was refurbished and the site upgraded with new stores). The video takes the audience on a tour of the Cascades City business district, and the student narrator discusses the problematic arrival of Wal-Mart and its challenge to smaller businesses in the area. The video ends positively, with the student narrator noting that light rail is bringing business to Cascades City. The rough video has some interesting aspects to it, and clearly the students who made it had the technology figured out – there is sound, movement, different kinds of shots, and visual perspectives.

After a brief pause, a student loads the second video. Technically this one is a little rougher than the first but still includes sound and visual elements. The video focuses on Cascades City politics, describing the political structure of the city. This video includes footage of students reporting on the oral history interviews they had conducted with community members, particularly with a member of the Cascades City Historical Society and author of a book on Cascades City history, and with a local retired businesswoman who is also present in the audience. After a longer pause, the third video comes up on the screen. This video has no student narration and no sound at all. The group sits in silence and watches the slides about the Cascades School District that include graphs and pie charts, pictures of staff and school, and some explanatory text. This video was created by one student working independently rather than by a group of students as the other videos were.

The fourth and final video is the least polished. The topic is the military influence on Cascades City, and the audience once again sits in silence and watches a slideshow – this one with pictures of some of the military bases in the area. There is no narration and no explanation by the students present about the point they are trying to make with their video segment.

Showing all four video segments takes about 10 minutes. After the final segment, Nick asks his students to stand at the front of the room and asks if the audience has any questions about the documentary.

BR: [community member] I know you all worked on pieces of this, but have you had a chance to come together and draw some conclusions about Cascades City as a whole from your work?

Omar: [student] We haven't had time.

Jane: [assistant principal] There seem to be different kinds of media that you chose to use. Someone tell me a little about the different media you used.

Jason: [student] Well I had some still photos and some video, and I drove around and took different pictures to give different perspectives.

Jane: How did you put it together?

Jason: I used video editing software.

Gloria: [student] The last two sections [of the second video] were photo shoots from the library. Kind of like a PowerPoint but using audio.

Ms. R: [a teacher from another small school] I thought the first one was really well done. You were talking about how the Cascades Mall left a bad taste in Cascades City and the wrong crowd. Who was the wrong crowd?

Jason: My information came from interviews and research. I think it was generally like vandalism and stuff like that.

Ms. R: You talked about how Cascades Towne Center is doing better. How are local businesses competing with the big chain stores doing?

Jason: I think the bigger stores are focused in the town center, but the smaller businesses, the way they're keeping afloat is by cutting prices and offering things equivalent to what the bigger stores are offering.

Jane: So a lot of you did interviews. I didn't see any pictures of you interviewing or of your interviewees.

Miguel: [student] Well originally this was supposed to be a paper, and we didn't decide to do a video until after.

MB: [community member] Could you talk about how this learning has or hasn't been different for you compared to the other classes here?

Gloria: We have much more freedom to get our learning. We had control rather than the book controlling us. We had the ability to experience the history rather than just reading and studying it. And [we] have a better understanding.

MB: How did you experience it?

Miguel: The interviews really helped with that.

Tom: [student] It was more active.

Gloria: I think also working with the software and the media we used.

Deshawn: [student] Instead of learning about things in the past we studied something much more current, so we were more understanding of what we studied.

Tom: Also for me, like, communication skills.

Gloria: And that we're working in groups because there are group projects in school, but the teachers still have a lot to say about what you're doing, but in this we go in groups and they said, "okay do it."

WB: [community member] I wondered how you drew the conclusions that were stated in the video. You quoted [the person from the Cascades City Historical Society] to say that the city needed to do more to be business friendly, and you drew a conclusion about Wal-Mart and was that from one source?

Jason: About Wal-Mart, I had done a lot of reading about smaller businesses not competing and when I spoke to [the person from the Cascades Historical Society] he said that too.

WB: So did you talk to some small businesses?

Jason: That's something that I would do.

WB: I recommend you talk to Cascades City Paint and Hardware. Everyone thought they would go out of business when Lowes moved in and they didn't. You had a couple of factual errors, and my question is about fact checking and how you know your interview was accurate and how another source might corroborate or contradict your source?

Jason: We interviewed one person but several of us interviewed the same person separately. And we did research as well. I think they pretty much had the same view as the others.

WB: Well this was more about the historical fact. And you want to be sure about the facts or people won't take the video as seriously if your facts are not on the money.

Ms. R: What is Cascades School District doing that you think was effective to raise the achievement gap?

Gloria: Like taking more English classes or science classes.

Ms. R: And how are we raising [standardized test] scores, did you find out anything about that? Because you had that in your video.

Deshawn: I think it's basically that students know in class what the teachers are teaching.

Isabel: [student] And also after school we have [standardized test] practice that you can take, and some teachers are incorporating [this] practice into their classes.

Ms. K: [teacher from Juniper] I think I missed your Essential Question. What was the Essential Question that guided this whole project?

Jason: How politics affected Cascades City.

WB: Could you expand on that a little, particularly with regard to the military bases and the economics? I didn't see a real clear connection between those segments and the Essential Question.

Miguel: We started with the politics one and that's when we did the interviews. Then we were trying to decide what to do with the information after we did the interviews and that expanded into all the different aspects of Cascades City.

WB: So that implies that you need to change the Essential Question, and can you change it after you get started?

Miguel: We can look back at the Essential Question because it did switch.

Deshawn: We probably could change the Essential Question due to the documentary and the outcome of it.

Nick: [teacher - to the students] Thank you guys. [The students sit down.] [to the audience] Thank you guys for coming and, just so you know, this is the first screening and the first time we've seen it all together.

When the lights come on, Nick passes out a comment form for the audience to complete about the screening with general questions such as, what did you like about this presentation?, what worked and didn't work?, what stood out for you?, what suggestions do you have for improvement? After completing the form, the audience stands up and chats briefly among themselves before leaving the room. What had they seen here today? Clearly the students feel some ownership over their work, over the project, and over the presentation itself. And they had to give the teacher kudos for allowing the students such freedom to display their understanding of what they learned. But what did the students learn exactly? The students didn't seem to have done very much background research and were not able to answer questions from the audience in any depth. The connection between some of the sections and the Essential Question for the unit was unclear.

The comments from the community members and teachers during the discussion highlight some holes in the students' research and thinking. To draw conclusions about the teaching and learning represented here, we'll need some context. The following sections describe how Nick's instruction is aligned with and supported by the rest of the system and illustrate the different contexts that affect Nick's instructional practice.

## Teaching Context for the Screening

Nick Johnson is a third-year teacher and house leader in Juniper, one of four "houses" (smaller learning communities) at Glacier High School (GHS).<sup>1</sup> He teaches 11th grade Humanities, 11th grade AP U.S. History, and a 10th grade leadership/advisory class. Nick did his student teaching at GHS and then was hired the following year to take the place of his mentor teacher. He came to GHS because he felt that the building and house administrators were accepting of his teaching style, and they were willing to let him experiment and try new things. During the 2006-2007 school year, Nick completed a masters degree in education, and he is working on his professional certification portfolio.

Nick's goals for his classroom practice for 2006-2007 were to incorporate service learning into all of his classes and to operationalize for himself the Coalition of Essential Schools' principle of "teacher as coach, student as worker."<sup>2</sup> To accomplish these goals, Nick focused his efforts on project-based learning (PBL), particularly in his U.S. History class.

Nick's U.S. History class decided early in the year to set aside the textbook and to base their learning on a series of projects that would help them reach the grade-level expectations and district expectations. After discussions with students about their interests, Nick made contact with the Cascades City History Museum and, as a result, developed a service-learning project for his students that they could work on for most of the year (see Exhibit B Classroom Support Materials). Nick describes how the project came about:

I started this year by using one class as my guinea pigs. They actually came in and said that they hated the history program and the book, and they were really bored. So we had a big conversation. ...I believe students should have complete voice in everything. So we talked about what the grade-level expectations are and what the district wants, and what they have to learn by the end of the year. Then we talked about how they could put that into a project, into their own learning. They talked about specific areas they wanted to study. Then we talked about what parts of history are boring and why they're boring. They said that museums were really, really boring. So we talked about the State History Museum. [We decided to work] throughout the entire year [to] create museum exhibits for the State History Museum and the Cascades City History Museum. So they are doing oral history projects and working with the museum's director to make sure they have exhibits in the museum that will be permanently displayed there.

Students worked on the research for this oral history project for a month. They did actual interviews with community members (e.g., the deputy mayor, the superintendent, historical society members) and their assignment included doing additional research to supplement what they learned in the interviews. They had several days of library time and reserved time on computers to do online research.

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this study the term "house" (e.g., Juniper) refers to a smaller learning community (SLC). At times the houses are also referred to as "small schools." All three terms are used at GHS interchangeably. We use the term "building" to refer to the larger building-wide administrative structure and physical plant within which the houses operate.

<sup>2</sup> The Coalition of Essential Schools (CES) is a national network of schools and centers engaged in redesigning schools to raise student achievement. CES schools share a common commitment to a set of beliefs about whole school change called the Common Principles. Glacier High School became a CES school in 1999 (see Exhibit A CES Ten Common Principles).

Originally, the final product for the oral history project was to be both a research paper and a museum exhibit. However, three weeks into the project and after the oral history interview process, the students decided to create a video documentary rather than a research paper. Nick supported this decision and helped the students rework their timeline.

As Nick and his students delved into their sustained project-based learning and service-learning experiences, Nick was faced with scheduling conflicts and questions about grading that he had to work out.

Conflicts occurred when Nick tried to schedule student time to complete independent work on the various projects. The U.S. History 11th graders were already doing service-learning projects in their advisories, in preparation for their junior exhibitions at the end of the year. Their project work with Nick began to cause scheduling and time problems for the students and their advisors. Realizing that his students were struggling to balance advisory projects with U.S. History projects, Nick went to all of the 11th grade advisors to ask if they would allow the U.S. History students to use the U.S. History project for their junior exhibition, rather than having the students do two service-learning projects. All but one advisor agreed initially, but the issue created tensions between Nick and these other teachers who felt he was undermining their advisory plans.

An additional question for Nick involved grading. As the oral history project took shape, Nick struggled with how to reflect ongoing, but not completed, work on early report cards. His option at the time was to give the students an incomplete, which resulted in pushback from parents who wanted to know why it looked like their son or daughter was failing his class when they were doing all the work. The structure of the grade reports didn't allow him to note progress rather than completion.

Related to that grading question was the question of how to evaluate the projects themselves. Initially, Nick and his students decided that the criteria for the exhibition should be the determining factor in grading. As the oral history project evolved though, Nick struggled with how to reflect all the work that the students did and the outside expectations of the museum for the final product, the video. Ultimately, the students were graded on the comment forms completed by the audience at the AP History documentary screening and by one another based on their efforts rather than on whether the museum used their videos. The museum only used two of the videos (the ones on business and politics) and Nick felt that he could not fail the 75 percent of the class whose videos were not accepted and thus discount all of their work. In student reflections on their process and product, out of 10 reflections turned in (of 13 students in the class), 5 students thought they deserved an A because they worked hard and put thought into their part of the work, three students felt they deserved a B because they contributed but not as much, one student gave herself a C because she didn't do very much work, and one student felt she deserved a D because she didn't do anything.

In his own estimation of his students' work on the oral history project and exhibition, Nick reported,

I think they did really well on gathering information and doing thorough histories and working with the community members. Then most of them had to spot check and research and make sure that what the person was saying was accurate. Some of them

maybe didn't do so well on that. But the hard part came when they had to turn that into a presentation. The technology they stumbled on some. One group did exceptionally well, and the rest fell into place behind them. I think [they understood] why they were doing it. They knew that they were making this project for the museum. They felt connected to the content, because it was Cascades City. But I'm not sure if they really felt connected to the project. Through conversations [after the exhibition], the students started really pulling apart what they were doing, reflecting on it, and then thinking about how they could make it better. But at first it was like "Okay, here. We're done."

Nick received very little feedback from anyone else after the exhibition. Jane Richards, his supervisor and house administrator for Juniper, said, "that was great." Nick wrote to many of those who attended to ask for feedback on what the students did well and what they needed to work on and got no response. In the absence of detailed feedback on his students' work and on his own practice in light of this screening, Nick was not clear about where he should focus his efforts to improve his teaching.

In the next sections, we'll explore the structures and policies in place at the district, building, and house levels that frame instructional practice in Cascades School District.

## District Support for Instructional Improvement

Alison Beck, the director of teaching and learning, came to Cascades School District three years ago, attracted by the leadership and by the district goals of closing the achievement gap and preparing all students for college. Alison came with 20 years of teaching experience and extensive training and experience as an external school coach and facilitator. In her current role, Alison (with her staff) facilitates the curriculum writing process for Cascades teachers who write the curriculum, supervises textbook adoptions, and coordinates all of the professional development for the district. Her primary initiatives are "to articulate our curriculum K-12, and to insure instructional best practices are evident in every classroom." Alison's approach to her role and to professional development reflects her training and experience. As she describes it,

I see my role differently than how school principals and teachers have interacted with district administrators in the past. That comes from my previous job, where I was an outside facilitator. It was really easy for me in that role to ask probing questions and hard questions and lay things out there, like, "How is this working for you?" I still try to play that role. It's a very different role than what principals and teachers are used to in a central office administrator, who is more apt to set the rule or the law. So it has taken a while for us to negotiate that, and I'm still not there with everybody.

### Cascades School District at a Glance

Cascades School District is located in Cascades City, a small West Coast urban area surrounded by the urban sprawl of a larger city. The district's catchment area is economically and racially diverse and highly mobile. District administrators and staff throughout the system have committed to redesigning their high schools and graduating all students college-ready. Two of the district's four secondary schools (Glacier High School and Hood High School) have converted to smaller learning communities. The third secondary school (Adams High School) is an alternative school and the fourth school (Peaks) is a stand-alone small school. Cascades School District schools serve students in grades K-12 about 3,000 of these are in grades 9-12. In 2006-2007, 64 percent of the Cascades City community voted for a bond giving the school district \$65 million to make capital improvements to its buildings and to develop community partnerships something that is considered a major accomplishment and testament to the school district's increasingly intentional focus on their relationship with the Cascades City community (see Exhibit C Cascades School District Demographic Data).

<sup>3</sup> At least one Instructional Facilitator (IF) is assigned to each school in the Cascades School District. IFs report to and ideally work and plan professional development activities with the building principal but are funded through Alison's budget. IFs are also required to send Alison a copy of their professional development calendars, agendas, or planning tools each month which she "reads" and comments on. Glacier High School has four IFs. Two are funded through Alison's office and two are paid through the GHS budget.

In her role, Alison has no evaluative authority over principals, but she does train all of the school-based instructional facilitators (IFs) and collaborates with school administrators in selecting IFs.<sup>3</sup> The primary evaluator for IFs is the building principal. Alison also has evaluative authority over IFs but leaves that role to the building principals as much as she can (see Exhibit D Cascades School District Organizational Chart).

When Alison came on board, she joined a district that had already started working on school reform issues. In the 1990s, the district had shifted to site-based management, and schools were asked to pick a national model to implement. These shifts forced school personnel to think about their practice and students in relation to site-based goals and to interact with one another in new ways, which laid the groundwork for what was to follow. Alison credits the superintendent with the vision and foresight to build on what was happening rather than start all over with another strategy.

Most district policy decisions, particularly concerning instruction, are made collaboratively and with input and representation from all schools, as well as the relevant departments at the central office, without losing sight of the focus on the district's goals for student achievement. Curriculum decisions, testing schedules, professional development topics, textbook adoptions, and hiring decisions are all made collaboratively, through committees or work groups composed of representative stakeholders (district administrators, IFs, building administrators, teachers, and outside contractors in some cases). Alison and her staff read all written reflections (regarded as an important part of any professional development activity), and consider all of the feedback in planning the next activity. They also review reflections with participants in subsequent activities to help participants link their learning experiences and track their thinking about what they are learning. Designed to collect and incorporate stakeholders' input into ongoing professional development and other decisions, this reflection process, followed at professional development meetings at every level (district, school, classroom) throughout the district, creates an atmosphere of transparency and community among participants.

### **Professional Development and Instructional Best Practices (IBP)**

If you think of site-based management as a pendulum, anybody who was here when it was implemented will tell you it went too far. We got to the point where site-based was so site-based that we had 25 separate entities going completely opposite directions. So what we're trying to do is shift everybody to heading [toward] the same focus, but still maintain site-based [management]. There might be some principals who don't like that, because they are being asked to take their arrow that is pointing this direction and shift it a little. But they are not being asked to make their arrow just like everybody else's.  
[Alison Beck]

Professional development throughout the Cascades School District has slowly started to coalesce around an increasingly unified set of ideas, processes, and practices at all levels of the system. There is an intense focus on instruction, and attention to values and processes of collaboration, transparency, capacity building, and the idea that everyone is a learner. These values are reflected at professional development trainings, administrative meetings, and in conversations at every level. Alison models the focus on these values and on the district instructional goals in her work, as do the deputy and assistant superintendents.

Alison describes her focus in this way:

What I try to do is to keep the administrivia part to less than 20 percent of my job, so that 80 percent of [my work] is whatever the actual work is – the actual planning of the content, the working on curriculum writing or whatever. ...I've found that if you spend your time on the content, on the instruction, on the curriculum, the decisions become very apparent. There's really nothing to discuss or argue about. It's clear what decision needs to be made...The other piece I would add to that is to have lots of feedback. Because if you get a significant enough body of feedback, that also makes the decision very evident. The data speaks for itself.

The common focus for all district-supported professional development is the Instructional Best Practices initiative (IBP), which sets forth, in a set of documents, the district's current vision of quality instruction. IBP is supported and extended primarily through professional development vehicles (delivered to different groupings of administrators, instructional facilitators, and teachers) that encourage community building across job levels and schools. The primary professional development vehicles are:

- Regular ongoing trainings for instructional facilitators (school-based coaches), which Alison and her staff plan and facilitate.<sup>4</sup>

- “Cohort” meetings attended by IFs and school administrators (principals and assistant principals) who are working on the same IBP element. These meetings are led by school administrators based on agendas developed at cohort planning meetings, which are facilitated by Alison and attended by school administrators.

- Principal-only professional development meetings. For 2006-2007, principals (and assistant principals) have three choices for professional development but must choose one: five sessions with Ron Ritchhart (author of *Intellectual Character* and outside contractor for the district), 20 hours of Lens on Learning (led by another outside contractor), or 20 hours of IBP led by Alison. This professional development ensures that principals get similar professional development to that of IFs and thus “stay ahead” of teachers.

- IBP colleague groups formed by grade level and made up of teachers from different schools that are working on the same IBP element. Colleague groups are led primarily by IFs (although at Glacier High School they share the leadership with the school administrators). Teachers are required to attend colleague group meetings.

The IBP documents were created by a committee of central office administrators, building administrators from each school, teachers, and instructional facilitators and have been revised slightly, again by a representative group of stakeholders, after the first year of implementation. These documents are written specifically enough to create a common vision and goals for professional development throughout the district, but they are also broad enough so there is room for site-based differentiation among schools. Beginning two years ago, schools were asked to choose one of the six IBP elements to focus on during a year and then form colleague groups (one per grade level) with other schools, which are working on the same element. Colleague groups meet 14 days

**IBP is demonstrated by the following six elements:**

- Development of disciplinary understanding
- Rigorous instructional strategies
- Ongoing relevant assessment
- Intentional planning
- Personal and collaborative reflection
- Personalized instruction/Building significant relationships

<sup>4</sup> The district-wide Essential Question used in all of the professional development for administrators and instructional facilitators this year has been: *How do instructional leaders develop the knowledge, skills, and strength of character to hold teachers accountable for integrating what they have learned in professional development into their ongoing practice?* In addition to the professional development vehicles listed here, district personnel also connect to schools and teachers through their membership on school site councils (every district administrator is on at least one). Some administrators also attend student exhibitions and serve on committees with teachers.

(or the equivalent number of half-days) throughout the year, with the exception of Glacier High School, which negotiated a different arrangement. Teachers from within GHS and across all four houses make up colleague groups, which are formed by discipline rather than grade level.

Although IBP constitutes a substantial part of the professional development offered to everyone, administrators cannot use IBP elements as part of teacher evaluations per their current agreement with the teachers union. The district continues to work on this issue with the union. Currently teachers can only be evaluated on whether or not they participate in IBP professional development activities but not on implementation of IBP into their lessons.

Nevertheless, the focus on IBP is beginning to be felt at the school and classroom level. A routine audit by the state in November 2005 noted that every teacher in every building could tell them what IBP was and what teachers were doing with it in their building. In addition, in a teacher-wide survey in March of 2007 there was evidence that teacher attitudes toward IBP were changing from widespread skepticism and varying levels of resistance to a growing understanding of how IBP could improve their practice. Teachers reported that after two years of meeting in colleague groups and focusing on IBP elements, they were much more focused on the curriculum, they were reflecting on their practice more with colleagues and students, and there was improved communication between schools. Many teachers commented that they felt IBP was impacting students by helping teachers be more focused on the curriculum and by adopting a range of assessments.

Teachers in a colleague group meeting at the end of the year mentioned that the consistent focus and regular colleague group meetings have created enough of a sense of trust that they want to move deeper into the work, looking more specifically and critically at their own work and posing harder questions of each other and their practice. This desire to move toward more probing, more specific, and more critical questions was also reflected in the IF trainings where IFs examined their norms and pushed themselves to not just “play nice” but to really ask difficult questions of themselves and of the teachers they are coaching, pushing teachers toward more reflection and greater rigor.

### **Perspectives on Applying IBP**

While teachers know about IBP and have spent two years looking at elements of IBP and thinking about the applications to their classrooms, some teachers, administrators, and instructional facilitators still lack clarity about the purpose of the IBP documents and their relationship to the curriculum. Several high school IFs reported during an IF training day that there is a lack of continuity and connection between what happens on collaborative planning days (the school-run professional development days) and in IBP colleague groups. Several principals also reported in a cohort planning meeting that some IFs don't seem to see how they can use the IBP documents to drive the work of instructional improvement even though many of them were on the committee that created the documents. In discussing this issue, Alison and her staff wonder whether IFs and teachers understand that IBP is the district's common vision of quality instruction and consider how to strengthen this message. They realize that they have not used or

referred to the IBP documents enough themselves in the trainings they provide for IFs and principals. They decide that they need to do more to model the use of the documents in their own work and in the professional development meetings they facilitate. Alison notes that for teachers and administrators, coming to understand what IBP is and what the district is expecting takes time. Ultimately what the district is asking for, Alison asserts, is not a concrete curriculum change or edict that everyone should move to project-based learning, for example. IBP asks teachers to engage in a more ambiguous process of becoming a learner even while they are teaching, and this challenges deeply rooted behaviors and accompanying beliefs about teaching and learning and the role of the district, school, and classroom teacher.

For some teachers there also seems to be a lingering sense of distrust toward what is still seen as a “top-down” district initiative. During an IBP colleague group discussion, a few teachers were still expressing worry that they would not have control over their classrooms. Comments from a teacher from one of the houses at Glacier High School reflected this worry about loss of site-based (school-based) autonomy and decision-making:

I guess I want some consistency in terms of alignment and working within our house. What I don't want [IBP] to turn into is a top-down-driven thing where I have less autonomy and less choice about how I teach and what I teach. ...I want this to be about [teachers] developing this conversation based on the curriculum documents. It's got to come from our work and what our kids need.

At the same time, at the district level, staff is striving to bridge the traditional gap between schools and central office so that the work of improving instruction is seen as everyone's work and is balanced between a central vision and expectations for good instruction and site-based implementation. Alison says,

We are working really hard here centrally for people to understand that there isn't a difference [between what's school-based and what's district-based work]. It's all the same work. ...We have our vision. We have our goal. We have our destination. Where we do try to differentiate is when we think, “Where is this school right now? What do they need?” But that conversation is also tempered with, “What holds them back?” You set that same high expectation for schools, and they have to figure out how to get there. So that kind of balance.

One issue that exemplifies the balancing act that goes on between central office and school autonomy with regard to IBP arose as schools were deciding which IBP elements to focus on for the next school year. District administrators explained at several meetings (attended by all school administrators) that the district could only support three elements at one time and asked the schools to focus on one of these three elements: *development of disciplinary understanding, ongoing relevant assessment, or rigorous instructional strategies*. One elementary school had wanted to work on one of the relationship elements and asked to do that. Although Alison agreed they were ready to move to that element, she said the district could not support a fourth element and asked them to return to one of the three the district was supporting. When asked whether this was an issue of resources, Alison explained that it was an issue of capacity, meaning that the work of IBP is done in colleague groups and if this school was the only school working on that particular element, they would not have a colleague group to work with. She also tried to reassure school administrators that IBP is not going away and that every

school will get to every element over time. She noted every school has its own professional development budget and can pay for professional development on other topics in addition to IBP if they choose.

## Building Support for Instructional Improvement

Glacier High School has a long history of being committed to reform. In 1999 GHS joined the Coalition of Essential Schools and adopted the Common Principles to guide their site-based, whole-school reform efforts (Exhibit A). These principles emphasize high expectations, student responsibility, and teaching as a coaching and mentoring process. In 2001,

GHS was awarded a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and restructured itself into four houses, each led by a house administrator (an assistant principal) and a house leader (teacher-leader from within the house). Each house was also assigned a designated counselor. All of these changes cultivated a climate that supported reflection and collaboration and a focus on instructional improvement. Several of the staff, including the principal, Bill Wheeler, and Jane Richards, assistant principal for Juniper, came to GHS from another well-established CES school and have formed a nucleus of like-minded (and reform-minded) instructional leaders and facilitators at the school.

One outcome of these structural and philosophical moves toward school reform was that GHS administrators and staff jumped into instructional improvement efforts even before the district refined its thinking and process into the IBP initiative. With their CES and Gates grant money, the high school was able to buy professional development half-days for houses to meet and begin to work on instructional improvement. Part of the Gates grant also provided coaches who worked with the individual houses to develop a process for instructional improvement that met the teaching and learning needs of the particular members

(staff and students) of that house. When the district began the IBP initiative, several GHS administrators and one of their IFs were part of the committee of stakeholders that defined what IBP instruction might look like and what the elements would be. With the award of a federal service-learning grant in the Fall of 2006, GHS (and, in particular, Juniper) has also taken the lead in the district in building deeper relationships with the Cascades City community, something that district administrators strongly support. GHS principal Bill Wheeler noted that he does not have to deal with a lot of micromanaging and oversight from the district because, in general, the school's teaching and learning philosophy, vision, and practices are in line with those of the district.

## Use of IBP at Glacier High School

Because GHS and its four houses already had a strong site-based culture that valued autonomy and house-based decision making, GHS staff members advocated for an IBP structure that would allow time for house staffs to meet apart from IBP colleague groups. GHS also wanted to stay within their houses for the IBP colleague groups, choosing to emphasize their collaborative house-based professional development model over the district's cross-school collaborative model. A compromise was reached with the district

### Glacier High School at a Glance (2006-2007)

Enrollment: 1400

Ethnicity:

American Indian: 2%

Asian/Pacific Islander: 13%

Black: 26

Hispanic: 15

White: 44%

Free/Reduced-Price Lunch: 65%

Graduation Rate: 71%

Converted to smaller learning communities within the building in 2001

(See Exhibit E Glacier High School Demographic Data.)

and the result was that at GHS the 14 IBP days would be split, with three of the days set aside for IBP colleague groups and eleven days set aside for collaborative planning time within the houses.<sup>5</sup>

On IBP colleague days, teachers across all four houses meet in disciplinary groups to discuss the particular IBP element the school as a whole has chosen to study that year.<sup>6</sup> Instructional facilitators and house and building administrators plan and lead these IBP colleague days. To accommodate the district's desire for cross-school communications and collaboration, teachers from Adams and Peaks High Schools join GHS staff for these colleague days. This joining has been frustrating for everyone however, because the schools do not share the same approach to reform and have different student populations. Staff from Adams High School in particular often expresses resentment at the lack of relevance to their particular situation and at feeling "talked down to" in these meetings. This has led to ongoing tensions in the IBP colleague groups at GHS and changes in the arrangement for next year.

During house collaborative planning time the faculty of each house meets to share lessons, discuss students, plan advisory, and conduct business meetings. The professional development section of this house half-day is often planned and led by the house leader, house administrator, and IF. Topics focus on the professional development plan developed by the house (described in the next section) and don't necessarily include a specific focus on IBP, although there are often overlaps.

Building and house administrators have pushed instructional improvement at GHS for at least three years with coaching and professional development support, and some teachers have made changes in their instructional practice. Many teachers are using Essential Questions to frame their lessons and units, some teachers have moved into more project-based teaching and learning, and several teachers are opening up their practice to colleagues in professional development activities. However, both GHS and district administrators agree that there is still much work to be done in moving teachers toward the benchmarks set out by the IBP documents and the district goal of preparing all students for college, work, and citizenship. Jane Richards notes that "one of the challenges we have is moving from the management- and work-oriented classroom to the thinking classroom."

### House Support for Instructional Improvement

Most of Nick's direct support and instructional guidance comes from within his house structure. His supervisor and house administrator, Jane Richards, one of the nucleus of reform-minded people who came from another CES school, has been at GHS for five years as assistant principal. Before coming to GHS Jane was a teacher for eight years and also served as department chair, site council chair, dean of students, and internal coach, helping to organize professional development activities.

As Juniper house administrator, Jane reports to Bill Wheeler, the building principal, but has primary responsibility for overseeing the administration of the house, dealing with student disciplinary issues (primarily with Juniper students), planning and facilitating Juniper professional development activities (in collaboration with IFs), and observing and evaluating Juniper teachers. As assistant principal, Jane also attends planning

<sup>5</sup> In 2006-2007 at GHS, IBP colleague groups met for three full days and three half-days. Small school collaborative planning groups met for eleven half-days.

<sup>6</sup> All four houses study the same IBP element. GHS's IBP focus for 2006-2007 was *development of disciplinary understanding* (referring to understanding key disciplinary content, standards of evidence and practice in a particular subject area discipline, and knowledge of pedagogical needs and curriculum within the discipline).

meetings and professional development meetings for administrators, attends district administrative leadership team meetings and cluster (GHS and all of its feeder schools) meetings, and has taken on responsibility for developing the master schedule for the entire school every year (with assistance from house leaders). Easily 40 percent of her time is spent on disciplinary issues – lunch duty, tracking down tardy and late students, assigning detention, calling parents about students, signing forms. She reports that she spends 30 percent of her time on instruction – observing teachers, meeting with teachers, planning professional development meetings, attending professional development meetings. Administrative duties for the building, including doing the master scheduling, budget work, and preparing packets about GHS for distribution to middle schools, take up about 20 percent of her time and administrative work on behalf of the district (e.g., committees) takes up about 10 percent. Commenting on this breakdown of her time, Jane says,

I know originally coming into administration and to an assistant principal [position], I had the idea that I would be working a lot as an instructional leader. I think I probably do that less than I had hoped. However, the reality is that I do it more than most assistant principals. I think that has a lot to do with small schools and the way we are set up. It also has to do with the time [we have] to collaborate.

During hall and lunchroom duty, Jane addresses most students by name (especially those in Juniper) and stops to chat with students briefly, primarily about their work or attendance. Apart from this, much of her direct contact with students happens in disciplinary activities, although she does speak with students when she is observing teachers. Two years ago she taught an advisory and hopes to do that again “because it was at least a more positive interaction, and then I got to know their friends. I got to know some of the kids not through discipline, but through service-learning or their activities.”

As an instructional leader for Juniper, Jane also actively participates in planning and leading house and IBP professional development sessions. For the past five years, Juniper has had a specific plan, separate from IBP, which drives their professional development. This plan is not formally linked to IBP although Jane does try to make some connections between the two. She describes the house professional development focus and its relation to IBP in this way:

I use the 3 Rs<sup>7</sup> to improve instruction in order to improve student achievement. So for two years we worked on relationships and that manifested itself in several ways. We looked at peer observations and how we collaborate together because that was very new, so we had to build a learning community by building trust. We also looked at...personalization, and we looked into studying advisory very carefully and decided to do a pilot with the teachers who were ready to roll, learning to do scaffolding, kid talk, diversity. We probably have the strongest collaborative culture of the small schools here.

The next thing we worked on was rigor. With all of these I had the IFs here to help me, and the Gates coach. So we looked at our curriculum, we used Understanding by Design as a template, we looked at our instructional techniques and having high expectations. We worked on that for two years. And then where we're moving into this third year is connecting relevance, and we all decided we wanted to do inquiry-based units but want to make sure they're relevant for kids. So we looked at service-learning and other things. We've just started that road. How it connects to IBP, when we were doing rigor, that connected. Right now in IBP we're doing disciplinary understanding, which also connects to what we've already done in rigor and planning inquiry units.

<sup>7</sup> The 3 Rs: Relationships with adults that help students succeed; Relevant curriculum; Rigorous instruction.

Jane explains how she thinks the Juniper professional development focus on the 3 Rs is being implemented in Nick's U.S. History project and screening:

The relationships and trust, the environment was safe for the kids, and I thought it was very unique the way he set it up. The students wanted to do a documentary, and Nick didn't know how to do it, but he brought in an expert who gave them important criteria and from that the students wrote their rubric. They had no exemplar but they knew what the criteria were. The content is also rigorous. It demands a lot of the students. The hard part was maybe the scaffolding. But they were in groups so they had each other for support and that turns out to be another learning process for the kids, how do we communicate and who is responsible for what piece? They're also reflecting on their learning and you don't always see the time for that. That makes it more rigorous when they think about their work and self-evaluate.

As an exercise for her own learning and to contribute to a unit-tuning exercise during a house professional development activity, Jane took her year-long professional development plan and goals and put them into the Understanding by Design framework that she was asking teachers to use for their units. She listed her Essential Questions, goals, the professional development activities (as lesson plans), and the teacher exhibition as a performance assessment. As she put it,

I was surprised at how well it worked...and how clearly it helped me see things. There was stuff I reflected on. Was this too much? Is this depth or breadth? I wondered if there were too many things going on. When I looked at my goals, I thought, "These are a lot of goals." I had six. Well, at least two of those are ongoing [like] "apply CES standards and practices" [and] "collaboration." Those we have been doing from year to year. I still wondered if it was too much, too ambitious. Was there scaffolding? Were the expectations too high? I thought they were not, because I have teachers at the high end. I am also accepting that teachers at the low end aren't going to get some of that stuff. I'm also looking at repeating some of the same professional development plan next year and focusing in deeper in certain areas.

In addition to being involved with planning and leading professional development activities, Jane also conducts classroom observations and evaluations of Juniper teachers. The district requires Jane to do either an hour-long observation or two 30-minute observations of each teacher every year. Jane reports that the first observation of the year is formal and uses a pre- and post-observation conference, as well as a written self-evaluation/reflection by the teacher, in addition to the actual observation. Jane uses a district observation form that includes the seven criteria mandated by the district for evaluating teacher performance and practice (see Exhibit F Classroom Observation Materials).

To assist her in breaking down the district criteria and focusing on observed behaviors, Jane has developed several supporting documents she also uses, including a standard memo outlining her instructional expectations which she sends to the teacher before the observation; an observation summary form for her own use that prompts her to note objectives, evidence, and questions; a checklist of specific behaviors and activities that she may or may not see in a classroom; and a list of reminders for her own use about, for example, Juniper's particular professional development focus (service-learning, project-based learning) and the IBP element for the year (disciplinary understanding). She keeps all of her rubrics and forms in a clipboard that she brings with her to every observation. During observations she notes teacher and student behavior and tries to speak with several students about what they are learning, why, and how they know

whether their work is good. She shares all of this information with the teacher during the post-observation conference.

After the first formal observation, Jane says she goes back into the same teacher's classroom two or three times more during the year, sometimes unannounced, for varying lengths of time, depending on how well she thinks the teacher is doing. Second and third evaluations are not as formal and usually don't include the pre-conference component. She reports that she is more directive with beginning teachers and more likely to ask questions of veteran teachers. Last year, she says, she was "really tough" (more specific and directive) on two first-year teachers. She describes this change in her practice:

Instead of giving them a break when their instruction was not there...I told them that they do not meet standard, and they need to work on those areas. Previously I probably would have said 'met standard' but in the comments [I would have] said, "you need to work on this." I gave them specific things they needed to work on. Then they had until the end of the year.

For teachers in their third year and beyond, Jane says she is "not quite as tough, but I'm real blunt. I say, 'you need to work on your classroom management.'" She says she expects veteran teachers to accomplish more and encourages them to set goals for themselves based on the professional development they are participating in. She describes her primary focus for observations of teachers:

The two big categories are instruction and class management. But the one most important thing is, are they checking for understanding of their students daily? Are you taking continuous informal assessments of whether they got it? Then, I would probably look for some routines in place. Class management is a kind of routine. There's kind of a business routine. Are they using thinking routines? Do they have discussion routines? That might really be focused around, have they planned intentionally? Then, the other piece is: are they real clear about their instructional objectives? And, is that matched with their assessment? So, kind of planning backwards. That's why this year we really wanted to look at unit planning. Thinking of the whole unit with the end in mind. Is that performance connected to match your objectives? What did you do all the way to build and scaffold that? Were you taking an ongoing assessment?

With respect to Nick in particular, Jane said she encouraged him to seek out IFs more to help reflect on his work and to make more use of the logistical support Jane already provides for projects rather than do it all himself. According to Nick, Jane's evaluations of Nick's teaching usually include comments about how student-centered his class is and suggestions that he be more transparent in his teaching (e.g., making sure he has student work and the rubric posted along with the assignment, so students and visitors know what the context for learning was). As Nick describes the feedback, "it's been pretty positive and focused on noticing that the students know what's going on and why they're doing what they're doing." He reports that Jane does not spend a lot of time in his classroom. However, because Nick is also the house leader for Juniper, he sees Jane regularly, allowing opportunity for informal conversation about Nick's teaching and the progress of his projects. Jane has been working with Nick to plan and facilitate professional development half-days for the small school and to build his capacity as a leader. Although they do talk about his instructional practice in this context, Nick says, "We've talked about my work but it's usually been, 'this was great. Can you help other teachers do this?'"

## Nick's Quandary: Getting Feedback on His Practice

When I became a teacher, I didn't want to be a traditional teacher. That's what I hated about school. I'm one of the teachers that hated school and wanted to make a difference. Finally stepping into this project – because it is something I had wanted to do – really affirms what I believe in, my philosophies as a teacher.

Moving into a more project-based approach to his curriculum has challenged Nick's teaching practice. As he worked to give more ownership over the class to students, particularly in his U.S. History class, Nick began to see changes in his relationships with students and changes in the demands made of him as a teacher. He found that students working on projects needed more and different information from him, and he found that he was doing more research on his own to keep up with what students were asking of him. He also found himself needing different kinds of feedback and coaching from his supervisors, IFs, and professors.

Nick tended to work in isolation from other teachers, partly due to personality and work style, but also because he felt no one else was doing what he was doing, so they had no experience to share with him. He asked instructional facilitators to help him with specific tasks, such as showing students how to video and then edit video for their documentaries, write story boards, etc. He did a lot of his own research online and asked for help from his professors at the university. He went to his house administrator and the building principal to tell them what he was doing and ask for feedback. They supported him by providing resources (substitute teachers, conferences, books, transportation, etc.) and encouraging him to share what he was doing in presentations to house faculty and at other conferences. He had a peer observer (the special ed teacher) who was looking at what kind of ongoing assessment Nick was doing but with whom he rarely talked. He also shared some of his work in small school professional development meetings as well as in IBP colleague groups. With all of this, one of the major challenges Nick says he faced was the lack of support.

It's been challenging to not have that much support. It's like "Nick, you're doing great stuff." So I must not need help with anything. That has been hard...sometimes it's nice to have someone on your sideline, helping you out, and not just saying, "you're doing great." Not so much cheering you on, but coaching you and helping you.

In discussing getting help with his issue about how to grade the oral history projects, Nick talked about why he didn't feel supported, referring to the tension between giving his students credit for their work while at the same time holding them accountable to an outside standard (the museum's standard for exhibitions):

I've been trying to figure out how to ask the right question to get an answer that I want. So maybe that's biased because I want the answer that I already have. ...It's just when I have asked questions like [how do I assess this project?] it's been, "well you could give them a rubric," and that's what I don't want to do. I don't want to be the one assessing this. And maybe I have the students create a rubric...but that's not as powerful because this is a documentary going into a professional setting. And no one else has done that so there's no one to talk to about what they did. I've even asked [my] professors at the university and [their suggestions] go back to the traditional forms.

Nick met once a month with other Humanities teachers from across all of the Glacier High School houses in IBP colleague groups led by IFs and Bill Wheeler, the building principal. These sessions focused on identifying and creating disciplinary understanding, examining how disciplinary understanding can serve as a basis for the creation of curriculum, and thinking about what disciplinary understanding looks like in practice. Colleague groups read articles, looked at teacher and student work, practiced protocols, and used collaborative time to tune or create lessons. While Nick's project-based learning and teacher-as-coach approach to teaching was supported by the IBP elements, he did not find the IBP professional development days useful in answering the questions uppermost in his mind. He reported:

The hard part with the IBP peer group is that it's everyone from the whole school and sometimes other schools in the district that teach Humanities. But we never talk to each other any other time throughout the year. So I'd bring my work in, and I might get a couple of pieces of advice, but then that's it. Nothing else. No follow-through. Most of the time, it's like, "Wow. I never thought about doing that." It's really kind of a shallow conversation. That might be because there isn't a strong sense of community. There aren't a lot of relationships in the large colleague groups.

## **Making the Connections**

Cascades School District has made a concerted effort to move toward its goal of graduating all students ready for college, work, and citizenship through an intentional focus on instruction, professional development, and capacity building. However, the example of Nick's U.S. History class highlights some systemic issues that continue to impact instructional practice in the district, in spite of all of the structures in place to support instruction and in spite of Nick's willingness to take risks and try new things. What light does this case shed on the connections between district initiatives and school and classroom practices?

## Self-Study Questions

Questions to consider about system supports for instructional change:

1. What kinds of supports are in place for the teacher at all levels (classroom, school, central office) of this district system? What obstacles did he face in trying to improve his practice?
2. How is the concept of “support” defined at different levels of the system?
3. How would you characterize the instructional leadership at each level of the system?
4. What are the primary strategies in place at each level (classroom, school, central office) to reach the goal of graduating each student ready for college, career, and citizenship?
5. How would you characterize the connections and/or disconnections between strategies at each level of the system?
6. Given what you now understand about the system, what suggestions would you make to the teacher, assistant principal, Director of Teaching & Learning or other system personnel about system supports for instruction?
7. What specific lessons and insights did you gain from this case study and how might they apply to your own work to support instructional change in service of increased student achievement?

**EXHIBIT A - COALITION OF ESSENTIAL SCHOOLS (CES) TEN COMMON PRINCIPLES**

1. The school should focus on helping young people learn to use their minds well. Schools should not be comprehensive if such a claim is made at the expense of the school's central intellectual purpose.
2. The school's goals should be simple: that each student master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge. While these skills and areas will, to varying degrees, reflect the traditional academic disciplines, the program's design should be shaped by the intellectual and imaginative powers and competencies that the students need, rather than by "subjects" as conventionally defined. The aphorism "less is more" should dominate: curricular decisions should be guided by the aim of thorough student mastery and achievement rather than by an effort to merely cover content.
3. The school's goals should apply to all students, while the means to these goals will vary as those students themselves vary. School practice should be tailor-made to meet the needs of every group or class of students.
4. Teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum feasible extent. Efforts should be directed toward a goal that no teacher have direct responsibility for more than 80 students in the high school and middle school and no more than 20 in the elementary school. To capitalize on this personalization, decisions about the details of the course of study, the use of students' and teachers' time and the choice of teaching materials and specific pedagogies must be unreservedly placed in the hands of the principal and staff.
5. The governing practical metaphor of the school should be student-as-worker, rather than the more familiar metaphor of teacher-as-deliverer-of-instructional-services. Accordingly, a prominent pedagogy will be coaching, to provoke students to learn how to learn and thus to teach themselves.
6. Teaching and learning should be documented and assessed with tools based on student performance of real tasks. Students not yet at appropriate levels of competence should be provided intensive support and resources to assist them quickly to meet those standards. Multiple forms of evidence, ranging from ongoing observation of the learner to completion of specific projects, should be used to better understand the learner's strengths and needs, and to plan for further assistance. Students should have opportunities to exhibit their expertise before family and community. The diploma should be awarded upon a successful final demonstration of mastery for graduation – an "Exhibition." As the diploma is awarded when earned, the school's program proceeds with no strict age grading and with no system of credits earned by "time spent" in class. The emphasis is on the students' demonstration that they can do important things.
7. The tone of the school should explicitly and self-consciously stress values of unanxious expectation ("I won't threaten you but I expect much of you"), of trust (until abused) and of decency (the values of fairness, generosity, and tolerance). Incentives appropriate to the school's particular students and teachers should be emphasized. Parents should be key collaborators and vital members of the school community.
8. The principal and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first (teachers and scholars in general education) and specialists second (experts in but one particular discipline). Staff should expect multiple obligations (teacher-counselor-manager) and a sense of commitment to the entire school.
9. Ultimate administrative and budget targets should include, in addition to total student loads per teacher of 80 or fewer pupils on the high school and middle school levels and 20 or fewer on the elementary level, substantial time for collective planning by teachers, competitive salaries for staff, and an ultimate per pupil cost not to exceed that at traditional schools by more than 10 percent. To accomplish this, administrative plans may have to show the phased reduction or elimination of some services now provided students in many traditional schools.
10. The school should demonstrate non-discriminatory and inclusive policies, practices, and pedagogies. It should model democratic practices that involve all who are directly affected by the school. The school should honor diversity and build on the strength of its communities, deliberately and explicitly challenging all forms of inequity.

See <http://www.essentialschools.org> for more information

**EXHIBIT B - CLASSROOM SUPPORT MATERIALS**  
**CONTEMPORARY MUSEUM PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

**Student-Created Essential Question:**

How has politics influenced change within society?

**Materials:**

Criteria for Oral History Project

Final Product Guidelines (student-created, based on museum exhibit criteria)

Juniper Oral History Project Assessment Rubric

**Goal:**

The goal of this project is for students to be able to compare and discriminate between historical ideas and identify how changes in United States history had a direct impact on people living in the Cascades City Area. The final product will be several museum exhibits that will focus on the student-created Essential Questions and will be on display for the public to view.

**Objectives:**

- The students will be able to compare and discriminate between ideas throughout history.
- The students will be able to compare the history of the United States to the local history through oral histories, primary and secondary source evaluation, and various forms of research.
- The students will be able to assess the value of certain histories, and describe why some histories are not prevalent in society.
- The Students will be able to relate knowledge from several areas, drawing conclusions and making personal predictions.
- The students will be able to design a museum exhibit piece for each one of their research components.
- The students will be able to plan and create a proposal for each step of the research and exhibit process throughout the year.
- The students will be able to communicate with community members and museum curators the purpose and goal of their projects and how they relate to history.
- The students will be able to recognize hidden meanings in history and find a way to include hidden histories in their exhibit.
- The students will be able to work together as a team when creating their exhibit and throughout their research process.
- The students will be able to state specific causes and effects throughout the history of the United States and how these events tie to the local history.

**Core Academic Learnings (CALs):**

Throughout the year this project will hit on all of the History, Civics, Social Studies, Communication, and Writing CALs.

**Civics:**

- 1.2 Examine key ideals of United States democracy such as individual human dignity, liberty, justice, equality, and the rule of law
- 1.3 Examine representative government and citizen participation
- 2.1 Understand and explain the organization of government at the federal, state, and local level including the executive, legislative, and judicial branches
- 2.2 Understand the function and effect of law
- 2.3 Compare and contrast democracies with other forms of government
- 4.1 Understand individual rights and their accompanying responsibilities including problem solving and decision making at the local, state, national, and international level
- 4.2 Identify and demonstrate rights of United States citizenship related to school, local, state, national, and international issues
- 4.3 Explain how various stakeholders influence public policy

The documents in Exhibit B were created and adapted by Nick Johnson for his U.S. History class.

**Communication:**

- 1.1 Use listening and observation skills and strategies to focus attention and interpret information
- 1.2 Understand, analyze, synthesize, or evaluate information from a variety of sources
- 2.1 Use language to interact effectively and responsibly in a multicultural context
- 2.2 Use interpersonal skills and strategies in a multicultural context to work collaboratively, solve problems, and perform tasks
- 2.3 Use skills and strategies to communicate intercultural understanding
- 3.1 Use knowledge of topic/theme, audience, and purpose to plan presentations
- 3.2 Use media and other resources to support presentations
- 3.3 Use effective delivery

**Project Set Up:**

The students and I began to think of ways that they could relate to U.S. history; as a group we decided to look at how the history of the United States influenced the history of Cascades City. The students thought they could relate the history of the U.S. to the history of Cascades City through oral histories, photography, documentary, and various projects. This is where I worked out a contact with the Cascades City Historical Society. The Cascades City Historical Society outlined several needs including oral histories, exhibit-type materials, and various project-related products that the students could complete to be showcased in the upcoming Cascades City History Museum. When these needs were outlined and identified the students wanted to know what a museum exhibit should represent. We began searching for museum exhibit criteria and are currently working on creating that criteria for our exhibits. The students then created a proposal for their projects and are currently working on various rubrics and criteria for their research.

**How the Class Looks:**

The students identified areas that they feel are interesting and important for a contemporary museum. They have currently outlined several units of study and have outlined how they feel the course should be organized. When we are finished with the introductory project the class will begin with a reflection activity surrounding the current topic. Current events and their relation to the community will be discussed. Then there will be a lecture/discussion on the topic and then project work time. Currently students are working on their own Essential Questions to familiarize themselves with their identified proposal, research, and product process. The next step would be to identify community partners that can help with their work. The unit topics are: cults and secret societies; the influence of women on history; immigration; politics; human rights; and music. Through each topic the students and I are working on outlining my role as the teacher to help coach them through the learning. The projects and the new learning relate to the district curriculum, as well as connect several interdisciplinary CALs and district objectives.

**Community Resources:**

|                                  |               |
|----------------------------------|---------------|
| Cascades City Historical Society | Contact _____ |
| State History Museum             | Contact _____ |
| Cascades City History Museum     | Contact _____ |
| Community Member                 | Contact _____ |

**The Final Product:**

The students have outlined areas that they are interested in creating exhibits for, using outlined criteria established while doing research into various museum exhibit requirements. These exhibits will be completed over the course of the year, approximately 7 exhibits per student. At the conclusion of the year the students' culminating project for the U.S. history course will be to create a museum exhibit. This may include a preview display at Glacier High School. The Cascades City Museum is interested in displaying some of the students' work, as well as creating a short-term exhibit for the State History Museum. In addition to exhibit work, students are writing a research paper for their topics. There has been some conversation surrounding publishing the students' research and the project through a service-learning grant sponsored by Learn and Serve America.

**EXHIBIT B - CLASSROOM SUPPORT MATERIALS**

**CRITERIA FOR ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

Unit of study: **Politics and Immigration**

You will be responsible for interviewing a person from the city of Cascades City that has been impacted or can relate to your Essential Question. Your oral history must relate to the research that you are completing for the project, and you will be required to make the connection between your research and your oral history.

For one of the oral histories you will write from that person's perspective, and for another oral history you will use documentation and research to support the person's perspectives.

You must clear your Essential Questions with me prior to beginning research and then we will work on finding a person that you can work with for the oral history component.

All of these oral histories will be published in our book along with our museum exhibits. The final products will be given to the Cascades City History Museum and appear in a short running exhibit at the State History Museum.

Some of the previously used Essential Questions have included:

1. How has politics contributed to changes within society?
2. Why do people decide to become politicians?
3. How has immigration affected communities?
4. How do perspectives of the American Dream differ between citizens and immigrants?

**EXHIBIT B - CLASSROOM SUPPORT MATERIALS**

**Oral History Project  
Assessment Rubric<sup>1</sup>**

Student Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_

|   | A | B | C | D | F | Comments<br>Strengths<br>Areas for Improvement |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| <b>Biography (5%)</b>   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Is historically accurate  |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Uses dates, details and anecdotes   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Places interviewee in historical context  |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Visual (Photograph)   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Maintains length requirements (1-page)  |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Revised final draft   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| <b>Historical Contextualization (25%)</b>   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Broad historical background established   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Creates context for understanding the interview   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Uses a wide range of primary sources  |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Uses a wide range of secondary sources  |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| "Newspapers of the day"   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Paper length  |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Research is balanced  |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Dates used to establish context   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Research is historically accurate   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Maintains length requirement (7-10 pages)   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Revised final draft   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| <b>Interview Transcription (25%)</b>  |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Minimum, 15, open-minded questions  |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Question organization   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Follow-up questions   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Transcription reflects tone of responses and includes parenthetical notes (smiles, cries, etc). |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Informational footnotes, or [bracketed] information, clarify references                         |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| "Thinking on Feet" (Ability to create questions based on interviewee's responses)               |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Formatting according to standards of the OHA  |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Revised final draft   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| <b>Analysis (25%)</b>   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Thesis that establishes historical value of interview   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| In-depth analysis and interpretation  |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Draws conclusions   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Application of historical contextualization and interview transcription through quotations      |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Revised final draft   |   |   |   |   |   |  |

**EXHIBIT B - CLASSROOM SUPPORT MATERIALS**

|   | A | B | C | D | F | Comments<br>Strengths<br>Areas for Improvement |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| <b>Mechanics (10%)</b>  |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Text is clear, grammatical, and spelled correctly.<br>Grade reduction for every 3 errors    |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Text is carefully proofread   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| <b>Technical Requirements (5%)</b>  |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Relevant title with interviewee present   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Bibliography/Works Consulted (MLA Formatting)   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Pagination  |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Appendix (relevant materials)   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| <b>Museum Exhibition (100%)</b>   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| POSTER BOARD<br>POWERPOINT<br>WEB SITE<br>VIDEO DOCUMENTARY<br>1-ACT PLAY (10 MINUTE LIMIT) |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Exhibit is historically accurate  |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Shows analysis and interpretation   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Places interview in historical context  |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Shows wide research   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Uses primary sources including interview  |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Uses secondary sources (Where appropriate)  |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Exhibit is clear, organized and had visual impact   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Text is clear, grammatical, and spelled correctly   |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Exhibit is neatly prepared  |   |   |   |   |   |  |
| Includes bibliography or works consulted  |   |   |   |   |   |  |

|  |
|--|
| <p><b>Overall Grade:</b></p><br><br><br> |
|--|

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Teaching Rubrics Created for National History Day. Available at [www.nationalhistoryday.org](http://www.nationalhistoryday.org)

**EXHIBIT B - CLASSROOM SUPPORT MATERIALS****FINAL PRODUCT GUIDELINES****Research Paper Guidelines and Expectations:**

A research paper presents the results of your investigations on a selected topic. Based on your own thoughts and the facts and ideas you have gathered from a variety of sources, a research paper is your own synthesis of these facts and ideas, with complete documentation of where those facts and ideas came from. In this sense a research paper is a new work that you create by consulting several sources to answer a research question.

A research paper is not a summary of an article or book or a collection of summaries of articles or books. You should demonstrate that you understand the problems by interpreting and evaluating the information you present.

The purpose of writing a research paper is two-fold: (i) to broaden your knowledge of a specific topic, and, most important, (ii) to help you gain experience in writing such papers. The experience in gathering, interpreting, and documenting information, developing and organizing ideas and conclusions, and communicating them clearly by itself constitutes an important part of your education.

- The paper should be well structured and should demonstrate your ability to analyze the problems you are writing about.
- The paper should contain no typos and no basic grammar mistakes.
- The essay should be typed on one side of the paper, double spaced, font size 12, and all pages should be numbered.
- Your References should be cited according to the MLA citation style.
- Your essay should be at least 5 pages long.

**Exhibit Guidelines and Expectations:**

Since we are creating a museum exhibit, the visual representations need to be of a high quality. You will need to redo any items that do not meet the museum standards as outlined below\*:

Museum exhibits play an important role in the transmission of historical knowledge. They are viewed by citizens of diverse ages, interests, and backgrounds, often in family groups. They sometimes celebrate common events, occasionally memorialize tragedies or injustices, and contain an interpretive element, even if it is not readily apparent. The process of selecting themes, photographs, objects, documents, and other components to be included in an exhibit implies interpretive judgments about cause and effect, perspective, significance, and meaning.

Historical exhibits may encourage the informed discussion of their content and the broader issues of historical significance they raise. Attempts to suppress exhibits or to impose an uncritical point of view, however widely shared, are inimical to open and rational discussion.

In aiming to achieve exhibit goals, historians, museum curators, administrators, and members of museum boards should approach their task mindful of their public trust. To discharge their duties appropriately, they should observe the following standards:

1. Exhibits should be founded on scholarship (meaning with an academic basis), marked by intellectual integrity, and subjected to rigorous peer review. Evidence considered in preparing the exhibit may include objects, written documentation, oral histories, images, and works of art, music, and folklore, videos, collages, recreation of historical documentation.
2. At the outset of the exhibit process (this would be at the end of the year), museums should identify community members in any exhibit and may wish to involve community members and representatives in the planning process.
3. Museums and other institutions funded with public monies should be keenly aware of the diversity within the communities and constituencies that they serve.
4. When an exhibit addresses a controversial subject, it should acknowledge the existence of competing points of view. The public should be able to see that history is a changing process of interpretation and reinterpretation formed through gathering and reviewing evidence, drawing conclusions, and presenting the conclusions in text or exhibit format.
5. Museum administrators should defend exhibits produced according to these standards.

6. Items that are recreated for the purpose of a museum exhibit need to represent integrity and historical accuracy. For example, if recreating a document that supports your exhibit then the document needs to be a replication of the original documentation.

In addition to following the above guidelines each student will need to write a commentary paragraph that explains the connection of their exhibit to their research. Why did you create what you did? What is it supposed to interpret? These paragraphs will be included in the exhibit at the end of the school year.

**Any item that does not meet the expectations will not be graded, it will be given back to the author to complete. The returned item must be resubmitted no later than five days from its return. This includes essays, exhibit visuals, and commentary paragraphs.**

\* Museum standards were created by Nick Johnson and the education director at the State History Museum.

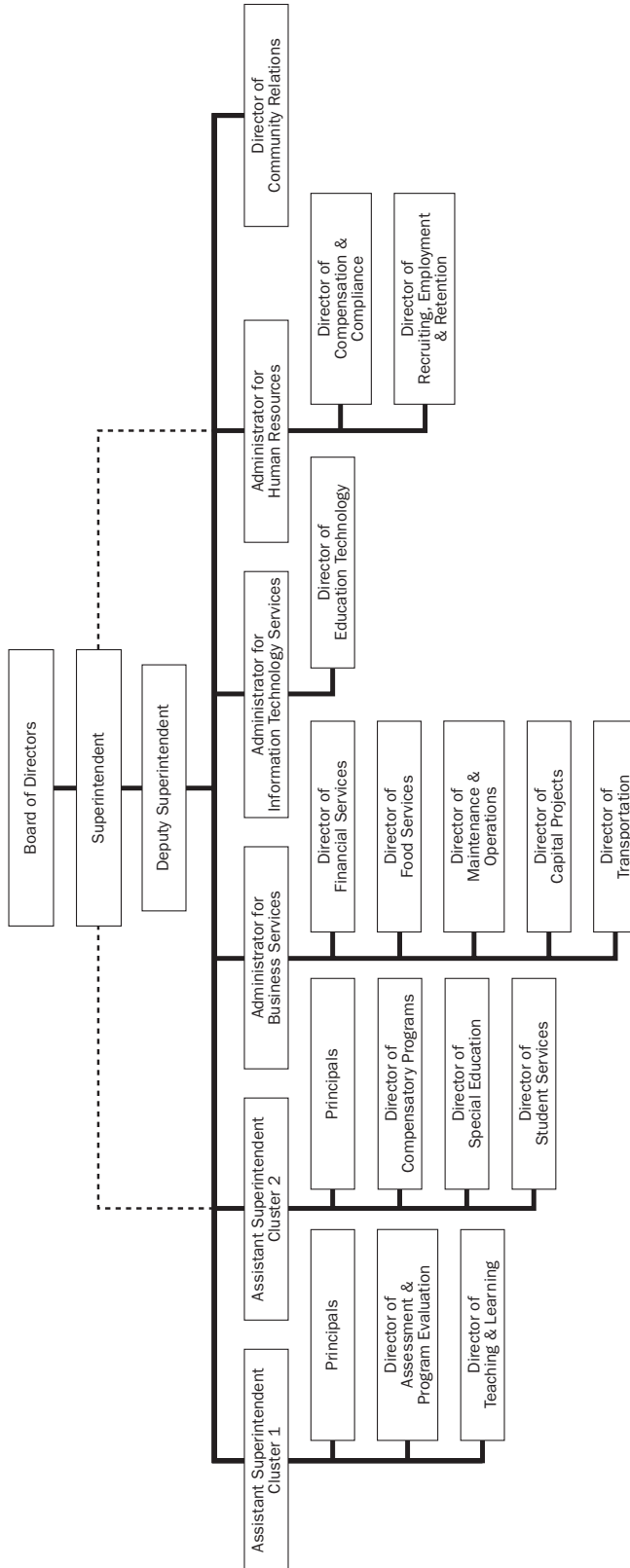
**EXHIBIT C - CASCADES SCHOOL DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

| <b>2006-2007 State Standardized Test Results (percent of students meeting standard):</b> |                |             |                |                |
|--|----------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>Grade Level</b>   | <b>Reading</b> | <b>Math</b> | <b>Writing</b> | <b>Science</b> |
| 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade  | 60%            | 57%         |                |                |
| 4 <sup>th</sup> grade  | 65%            | 43%         | 47%            |                |
| 5 <sup>th</sup> grade  | 61%            | 47%         |                | 19%            |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> grade  | 57%            | 30%         |                |                |
| 7 <sup>th</sup> grade  | 59%            | 37%         | 56%            |                |
| 8 <sup>th</sup> grade  | 58%            | 33%         |                | 24%            |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> grade   | 72%            | 30%         | 77%            | 18%            |

| <b>Student Demographics</b>   |        |
|---|--------|
| Total enrollment  | 11,700 |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>  |        |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native  | 2%     |
| Asian   | 8%     |
| Black   | 20%    |
| Hispanic  | 16%    |
| White   | 49%    |
| <b>Special Programs (May 2007)</b>  |        |
| Free or reduced-price meals   | 57%    |
| Transitional bilingual  | 9%     |
| Migrant   | 0%     |
| Special education students  | 13%    |
| Languages spoken  | 60     |
| Title 1 school-wide projects (total school-wide population)                 | 9290   |
| LAP (targeted assistance for students at 9 schools)                         | 1074   |
| Students enrolled in Advance Placement courses                              | 547*   |
| <b>Other Information</b>  |        |
| Unexcused absence rate (2006-2007)  | 0%     |
| Annual dropout rate (2005-2006)   | 8%     |
| On-time graduation rate (2005-2006)   | 67%    |
| Extended graduation rate (2005-2006)  | 72%    |
| *indicates total enrollment. Some students may take more than one AP class. |        |

| <b>Teacher Information (2005-2006)</b>  |       |
|---|-------|
| Classroom teachers  | 688   |
| Students per teacher  | 19    |
| Average years of teacher experience   | 12    |
| % of teachers with at least a master's degree   | 55    |
| Total number of teachers who teach core academic classes                              | 588   |
| % of teachers teaching with an emergency certificate                                  | 0.2   |
| % of teachers teaching with a conditional certificate                                 | 0     |
| Total number of core academic classes   | 1,551 |
| <b>NCLB Highly Qualified Teacher Information</b>                                      |       |
| % of classes taught by teachers meeting NCLB Highly Qualified (HQ) definition         | 95    |
| % of classes taught by teachers who do not meet NCLB HQ definition                    | 5     |
| % of classes in high poverty schools taught by teachers who meet HQ definition        | 96    |
| % of classes in high poverty schools taught by teachers who do not meet HQ definition | 4     |
| % of classes in low poverty schools taught by teachers who meet HQ definition         | 100   |
| % of classes in low poverty schools taught by teachers who do not meet HQ definition  | 0     |

EXHIBIT D - CASCADES SCHOOL DISTRICT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



**EXHIBIT E - GLACIER HIGH SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**

| <b>2006-2007 State Standardized Test Results (percent of students meeting standard):</b> |         |      |         |         |
|--|---------|------|---------|---------|
| Grade Level  | Reading | Math | Writing | Science |
| 10 <sup>th</sup> grade   | 64%     | 21%  | 73%     | 12%     |

| <b>Student Demographics</b>            |      |
|--|------|
| Total enrollment                       | 1300 |
| Juniper House enrollment               | 320  |
| <b>Ethnicity</b>                       |      |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native         | 2%   |
| Asian                                  | 14%  |
| Black                                  | 24%  |
| Hispanic                               | 17%  |
| White                                  | 43%  |
| <b>Special Programs</b>                |      |
| Free or reduced-price meals            | 53%  |
| Transitional bilingual (May 2006)      | 9%   |
| Migrant (May 2006)                     | 0%   |
| Special education students             | 12%  |
| <b>Other Information</b>               |      |
| Annual dropout rate (2005 - 2006)      | 4%   |
| On-time graduation rate (2005 - 2006)  | 78%  |
| Extended graduation rate (2005 - 2006) | 86%  |

| <b>Teacher Information</b>                     |     |
|--|-----|
| Students per teacher                           | 20  |
| Teacher experience (years)                     | 8   |
| Teacher education (at least a master's degree) | 59% |

**EXHIBIT F - CLASSROOM OBSERVATION MATERIALS**

**Glacier High School Observation Schedule**

I will be working with you this year in the evaluation process. Listed below is the semester week for our pre-observation, observation and post-observation. Please contact me the week before to schedule a specific period and times. I know there are unexpected circumstances that may arise for both of us, and I will stay flexible to accommodate changes.

When we meet in our pre-observation conference, please bring the lesson plan for the lesson I will be observing. I would also like to discuss:

1. What should all students know, understand, and/or be able to do as a result of this lesson? Why do they need to know, understand, or do this?
2. What prior knowledge relating to the objective have the students acquired?
3. How will you know the students understand the lesson? What are students doing if/when they are successful? What does success look and sound like in your classroom?
4. How will students be assessed? How will assessment results guide future instruction?
5. How do you address and promote literacy in your subject area?
6. How do you structure your lessons to support the expected skills that are tested in the state standardized test? Your small school competencies?
7. What are your specific goals around instructional growth for the year?
8. How can I best assist you this year?

Let me know if you have a conflict with this week. Thank you. I look forward to working with you this year.

The materials in Exhibit F were adapted by Jane Richards for her own use from materials provided by the district, principals, coaches, and others with whom she has worked.

Pre-Observation/Observation/Post-Observation will be the week of: \_\_\_\_\_

The seven evaluative criteria in the district's evaluation form are:

1. Instructional Skills
2. Classroom Management
3. Professional Preparation and Scholarship
4. Effort Toward Improvement When Needed
5. Handling of Student Discipline and Attendant Problems
6. Interest in Teaching Students
7. Knowledge of Subject Matter

**Instructional Expectations**

What I will be looking for in every class:

1. Clear instruction and clear expectations
2. Meaningful and challenging curriculum (rigor)
3. Questioning strategies that push students to think critically
4. Authentic relationships, respect and decency
5. Enduring understandings and learning objectives
6. Correlation to competencies and standards
7. Strong assessment and checking for understanding
8. Strategies to insure every student is learning

Possible Questions/Observations:

1. Classroom Management

- How do you shape behavior as opposed to just imposing consequences?
- Is there a climate of respect and decency in the classroom?
- Are there clear behavior expectations?

2. Enduring Understandings and Essential Questions

- Are students engaged in enduring understandings?
- Are Essential Questions evident and used to help facilitate understanding?

3. Student Awareness of their Learning

- Do students know what they are expected to know and be able to do as a result of this lesson?
- Are students aware of why they need to learn this content?
- Are students aware of how this lesson will help with future lessons/assessments?

4. Student Knowledge about the quality of their work (questions asked to students)

- How do you know if your work is “good” enough?
- If you want to make your work better how do you know what needs to be improved? What needs to be included?
- When you earn a grade, can you explain why you earned it?

5. Visible Signs of Clear Expectations

- Are standards/rubrics posted in the classroom and discussed with students?
- Are models (exemplars) of good quality student work on display and are the criteria that make the work “good” labeled?
- Can students show examples of their work and describe the criteria they are trying to meet?

**EXHIBIT F - CLASSROOM OBSERVATION MATERIALS**

**Classroom Observation Check Sheet**

To:  
From:  
Date:

When I walked through your class today, I observed:

Students were:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> On task and engaged                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Writing                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Making appropriate behavior choices | <input type="checkbox"/> Working on assignments |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Actively participating              | <input type="checkbox"/> Listening to peers     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Working in cooperative groups       | <input type="checkbox"/> Using research skills  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Working in pairs                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Problem solving        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engaged in "real world" tasks       | <input type="checkbox"/> Creating a product     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Performing scientific investigation | <input type="checkbox"/> Taking notes           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstrating knowledge and skills  |   |

You were:

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Directly teaching  | <input type="checkbox"/> Leading a class discussion  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitating cooperative learning                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Tutoring a small group      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading to students                                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Helping individual students |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Praising/supporting students                             | <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring student work     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Assessing student learning                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Checking for understanding  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Setting clear expectations                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Redirecting students        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Maximizing student responses (wait time, etc.)           |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dignifying answers and pressing for more                 |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Using standards/rubrics/criteria to discuss student work |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____   |  |

Positive classroom climate was evident:

- Bulletin boards supporting instruction
- Obviously well-organized lesson
- Well-organized and clean classroom
- Strong focus on learning and respect for the content
- Respectful student/teacher interaction
- Authentic relationships and cohesiveness
- Respectful student interactions
- Members of the class helping one another
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Clear expectations:

- Samples of student work with rubrics on display
- Clear expectations were visible for all
- Classroom behavior expectations/norms displayed
- HW assignments/schedules/due dates are clearly posted
- Day's objective visibly displayed

**Student Feedback**

Student 1:

What are you learning?

Why are you learning this?

Is your work good?

How do you know your work is good?

Student 2:

What are you learning?

Why are you learning this?

Is your work good?

How do you know your work is good?

Student 3:

What are you learning?

Why are you learning this?

Is your work good?

How do you know your work is good?

Notes/Questions/Coaching Ideas:

**EXHIBIT F - CLASSROOM OBSERVATION MATERIALS**  
**Cascades School District Observation Report Form**

Employee's Name:

Position:

Observer's Name:

Date:

Class Observed:

Time of Observations: From \_\_\_\_\_ To \_\_\_\_\_

1. Instructional Skills:

2. Classroom Management:

3. Professional Preparation and Scholarship:

4. Effort Toward Improvement When Needed:

5. Handling of Student Discipline and Attendant Problems:

6. Interest in Teaching Students:

7. Knowledge of Subject Matter:

Date of post-observation conference:

Evaluator's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Employee's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**EXHIBIT F - CLASSROOM OBSERVATION MATERIALS**

**Post-Lesson Self-Evaluation/Reflection**

(Please bring this with you to the post-evaluation conference.)

Date of lesson: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What did you want all students to know, understand, and/or be able to do as a result of this lesson?
  
2. How well did students accomplish that objective? What specific evidence tells you that this is so?
  
3. What did you do, as a teacher, to assist students in learning the objective?
  
4. Knowing what you know now, what would you be sure to do again if you were re-teaching this lesson?
  
5. Knowing what you know now, what changes would you make if you were re-teaching this lesson again? Why would you make these changes?
  
6. What do you want to be sure to discuss in the post-conference?