Quality Instruction and Achievement for All:
The Dr. William W. Henderson Inclusion Elementary School

<u>Introduction</u>

Located on one of the main avenues cutting across Dorchester, the Dr. William W. Henderson Inclusion Elementary School is located in an older urban neighborhood with well-maintained, small homes on streets lined with Maple and Ash trees. Though traffic is heavy at times on the main street bordering the school, the red brick building is situated around a courtyard and feels serene and welcoming inside. The Henderson currently serves 250 students; 33% of students have an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The students and staff are from a variety of ethnic, linguistic and ability backgrounds. Since 2006, Henderson student scores in reading and math have steadily increased. In 2006, 40% of students in ELA and 32% of students in Math scored proficient or higher. By 2012, approximately 66% of students in ELA and 65% of students in Math scored proficient or higher.

As part of the inclusive culture of the school, the teachers and staff are committed to providing support and accommodations that are necessary for some students to learn, but also available and useful to ALL students. According to current Principal Patricia Lampron, "Our job in teaching is to minimize barriers – any barriers – including those created by disability and maximize the opportunities for learning and participation for all our students. We want to enable the curriculum to allow access for all students. The accommodations are for some and are useful for ALL."[1]

In 2009, Patricia Lampron became the current principal of the Henderson, following the legacy of retired principal Dr. William W. Henderson who championed inclusive education strategies for his entire career. Dr. Henderson and his colleagues built a strong school culture at the Henderson that supported inclusion through respect and acceptance. Teachers, families and students have historically worked well together to support student growth and learning in many ways.

Still, in the wake of Common Core Standards and testing Principal Lampron found that more work was needed to push average student performance from passing to proficient and beyond. Building on the solid foundation of hard work and inclusive culture she inherited from Dr. Henderson, Principal Lampron worked with the staff to simultaneously shift the school culture to focus more on academic achievement and create more effective instructional practices, systems and processes to improve the learning and achievement of ALL students.

The purpose of this case study is to focus on the development and implementation of current key practices at the Henderson that have resulted in greater student learning and achievement. These practices are:

- Transforming the school culture to support academic achievement and strengthening instruction. The Henderson pursued a simultaneous process of shifting the school culture and improving outcomes as related to academic achievement.
- Strengthening specialized and individualized instructional practices based on principals of universal design using a thoughtful instructional model and technology to enable greater learning;

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[1] P. Lampron, personal communication, October 15, 2013. All quotes from P. Lampron are from this date unless otherwise indicated.

- Creating mechanisms, tools and processes to enable adult collaboration, joint problem solving, and communication. These mechanisms include six week data cycles and use of an online shared planbook.[2]

These key approaches are linked with improved student learning and success, as measured by internal assessments (i.e., teacher designed assessments), paced interim assessments and MCAS exams. All learning goals, activities and assessments are explicitly connected with Common Core Learning Standards.

Background

History

The Dr. William W. Henderson school, formerly known as the Patrick O'Hearn Elementary school, became an inclusion school in 1989. Dr. William Henderson was principal until 2009, at which time Principal Patricia Lampron assumed leadership after working for a year on leadership initiatives with him at the school. Dr. Henderson remains a strong advocate and champion for including students with special needs and has written prolifically on successful strategies and mindsets necessary for that to happen in schools.

The Henderson is recognized nationally as a model school for its inclusion practices. Depending on their needs, students participate in individual education plans and general education classes. Henderson leaders estimate that about one-third of the students have a disability, and "students with mild, moderate and significant disabilities and those considered talented and gifted learn together and from each other" in the classroom.[3]

Curriculum

The principles of Universal Design Learning (UDL) influence all the curriculum and pedagogical approaches at the Henderson, from learning and teaching materials to classroom design. Similar to other Boston Public Schools, the Henderson uses a workshop instructional model and incorporates UDL into the station/center learning instruction that occurs in every classroom. Teachers use Reading Streets in all K2-Grade 5 classrooms, Six Traits Writing rubrics and TERC2 for mathematics. The school adapted the Massachusetts Mathematical and English Language Arts curriculum frameworks and offers a variety of extracurricular activities, including visual arts, music, movement, and drama through partnership programs.[4]

Family Engagement

The Henderson is trying new strategies to better engage parents, in addition to traditional outreach such as surveys, newsletters and in-person meetings. Three times a year, the Henderson invites families to school-wide activities, such as performances and celebrations, so they can see the entire

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[2] P. Lampron, UDL presentation, 2013.

[3] At the Henderson, the category of "significant" disabilities means a student who has a severe physical and/or mental impairment that seriously limits one or more functional capacities (such as mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, etc.). Retrieved from http://boston.k12.ma.us/henderson/ on Oct. 8, 2013.

[4] P. Lampron, personal communication, October 10, 2013; Retrieved from http://boston.k12.ma.us/henderson/ on October 8, 2013.

student body working together. The school also encourages parents to visit the website regularly for updates about the school through webinars and a complete academic calendar for the year. Parents can use a "parent access room" located at the school during set hours to access the internet and other resources. There are also monthly coffees with the principal, grade level teams and teachers, new family outreach initiatives and workshops for non-disabled parents about inclusion.

Like other BPS schools, there is a School Site Council that makes decisions around policies, programs, budget, and selection of new staff. Membership includes parents, staff who are members of the Boston Teachers Union and the principal. Parent representatives are elected annually by ballot and meetings are open to all parents and staff members. All Henderson parents are automatically members of the School Parent Council.

Student Performance

In 1989-1990, students at the O'Hearn had low standardized-test scores, placing their achievement near the bottom of all elementary schools in Boston. The staff decided to focus on reading, improving instructional quality and providing more direct assistance to student reading below grade level. They also focused on increasing the time spent reading at home through a vigorous and intense family engagement strategy.

In 2009, Principal Lampron and the teaching team built on the Henderson's foundation of a strong, positive school culture <u>and</u> historical focus on literacy. They worked together to strengthen and create new systems and processes to improve instructional practice. These strategies include instituting instructional rounds, using data to inform instruction and building in regular time for staff to reflect on individual and school wide instruction. The next section of the case will unpack this process and series of decisions in more detail.

<u>Graph 1: O'Hearn/Henderson MCAS Scores (ELA, Math, Science) from 2006-2012 [5]</u>
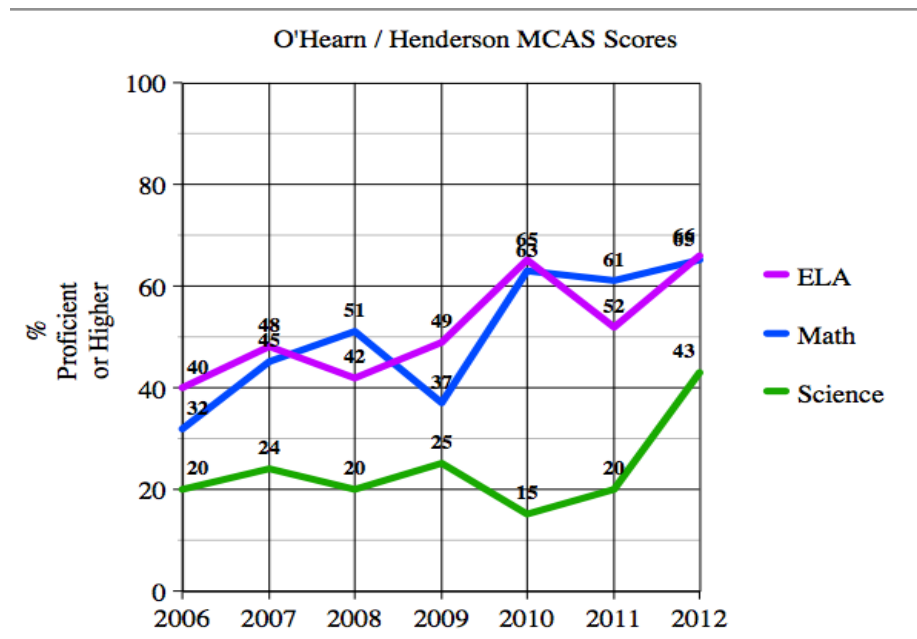
Phases of Development: *Renewing the focus on improving student learning*

Developing a common understanding of good instruction

When Principal Lampron joined the teaching team at the Henderson, student performance on assessments had improved since the 1989-1990 school year. However, the school was academically performing near the middle for elementary schools in Boston. Her first priority as a new principal was to improve learning at the school and shift the conversations about student performance from pass/not-pass to how students become "proficient" and "advanced."

Principal Lampron said, "Our first step was doing some calibration around what we believed was good instruction at the Henderson. We did this by using Webb's Depth of Knowledge and Bloom's Taxonomy to structure our discussions about levels of student learning and went around and looked at student work in the school."

During instructional rounds and reflection meetings, the teachers started to debate about what they observed. Some argued that certain lessons or tasks were rigorous, while other teachers vehemently disagreed.

Principal Lampron said:

> Our debates confirmed that we were even more all over the place than we originally thought! So, we spent time that first year [2009-2010] in instructional rounds and spent time developing a common language for how we talk about instruction and instructional rigor.... We started to talk about instruction and realized that when we talked about instructional rigor we were not speaking the same language in terms of what we thought, so we started there. What has made us successful is that we went through a process to make this happen. We frontloaded discussions and spent a lot of time calibrating our understanding around what good instruction looks like.

Learning to use data to inform instruction

Key to this ongoing process of calibration was the growing use of evidence to support observations and opinions. Starting with student performance data from 3rd through 5th grade, Principal Lampron created graphs and charts that the teachers started to use when discussing instruction. She instituted a structured practice of instructional rounds, during which teachers visited classrooms and watched one another's instruction using protocols to guide their observations. The purpose of the protocols was so teachers could better define what they thought was successful teaching and why. Teachers discussed in grade level, vertical team and ILT meetings what they saw, with Principal Lampron pushing them to use evidence to support their feedback and observations. For example, when teachers commented that "students were engaged" and the lesson was "effective," the group discussed in detail why they thought that and what "engagement" and "effectiveness" looked like in the classroom. Eventually, the practice of instructional rounds and using data in this way was phased into the lower grades, as well. (See Exhibits 1a and 1b.)

Improving lesson planning

The intense and ongoing calibration process enabled frank discussions about student performance and quality of instructional practice at the Henderson. This led to a renewed focus on lesson planning and preparation throughout the 2010-2011 school year. As the teachers discussed what they did to plan for class, it became clear that they all prepared differently. For example, some teachers created outlines to guide instruction and others prepared detailed lessons. The teaching team decided to "go back to the basics" and in ILT meetings started discussing the elements of a good lesson plan. They asked each other questions such as, "What does a good lesson plan look like? Should we have defined lesson goals? Should we have fully written plans? How do we know students are engaged – what does that look like?"

Principal Lampron participated in the discussions, taking notes and sharing them with the teaching team. During meetings, she pushed for consistency in lesson planning across all subjects and grades. For example, some teachers said that they did not think it was necessary to have a lesson goal. Others argued that lesson goals helped them develop relevant activities and link their work with the common core standards. Ultimately, the teaching team chose to have standard, consistent elements in all their lesson plans to help guide planning at the Henderson.

Principal Lampron said:

> Throughout early stages of our process, we spent a good amount of time using the ladder of inference and holding one another accountable for our students not moving up – that was difficult. But that process then created some psychological safety - and it was a learning curve. This process helped us develop over time a collective sense of efficacy. For example, if we are teaching third grade we care about what is happening to students in fourth grade because we just had them as students. In the fourth grade, we care about what is happening with students in second grade because we will get them in a couple of years. So, we worked on developing collective efficacy across the school verses at the classroom or grade level.

Regularly using student data to inform instruction, combined with the problem-solving culture at the Henderson, resulted in open discussions about accountability, clearer expectations for lesson planning, and more effective communication among grade level and vertical teams. This process also lead to key decisions about changing school structures and adopting innovative instructional approaches, such as revising the instructional model and identifying more inclusive accommodations for special needs students, such as using more adaptive technology in the classroom.

Phases of development

Below is a table depicting the phases of development and implementation of instructional practices, systems and structured from 2009 through 2013 at the Henderson. The teaching team continues to actively reflect on current approaches and refine them. The next section will go into more detail on the key characteristics of the Henderson and the strategies and tools the teaching team has used to improve instructional practices and student learning.

Table 1: Phases of Development at the Henderson

Strategies	Academic Years			
	2009-2010	**2010-2011**	**2011-2012**	**2012-2013**
Calibration around instruction	▓	▓		
Using data to inform instruction		▓	▓	▓
Improving lesson planning		▓	▓	▓
Restructure meeting schedules		▓	▓	▓
Phasing in and using online planbook and ANet		▓	▓	▓
Redesigning instructional model		▓	▓	▓
Shifting technology into classroom		▓	▓	▓
Using technology as integral part of instruction		▓	▓	▓

Systems Building: Creating structures and selecting tools to strengthen planning, collaboration and communication

Over the past four years, the teaching team has made several decisions that have led to improved student performance. This section will explore three key areas and major tools and mechanisms that strengthened student learning at the Henderson. Three key focus areas that lead to improving student learning are:

- Maintaining an inclusive and accepting school culture
- Strengthening specialized and individualized instructional approaches
- Establishing and refining systems and processes that support collaboration and problem solving[6]

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[6] P.Lampron, UDL presentation, 2013.

School Culture

Principal Lampron and several long-serving staff credit Dr. Henderson with building the accepting, open and respectful school culture necessary for the continued success of all students at the Henderson. The social norms of the school require adults and students alike to show respect, responsibility, determination and inclusivity in their behavior and attitude towards themselves and others. Several mechanisms facilitate this school culture.

<u>Adult behavior modeling</u>

The teachers, staff and other adults in the building consciously model respectful, responsible, determined and inclusive behavior with each other and the students. The leadership roles of adults are clear, defined and often shared, which demonstrates for students what responsibility, effective team work and leadership look like.

For example, both teachers and paraprofessionals take students for bathroom breaks and see to other needs for which support staff and paraprofessionals are traditionally responsible. There is an expectation that all staff – including cafeteria and custodial staff – play a positive role in creating an inclusive environment. This consistent modeling of positive behavior sets a tone at the Henderson that students emulate.

Principal Lampron credits a subtle change in the meeting schedule as an unexpected driver of positive school culture. Principal Lampron said:

> All of our meetings tended to focus on instruction and improving our work at the school. They were professional in nature. Initially, I pushed back on using meeting time to discuss social events and things like that...it should be sacred time dedicated to improve what we do here...but the teachers wanted to get to know each other more and invite colleagues to events outside of school...so they really pushed back on me. Now, we do standing staff meetings for 10 minutes once a week where we do 'showers of praise' that are aligned to the curriculum and standards, plus announcements and invitations...so there is social outreach happening. These weekly 10 minute standing staff meetings are one of the best ways I know of to address school culture...ever.

<u>Student leadership</u>

Students have the opportunity to demonstrate the hallmark traits of respect, responsibility, determination and inclusivity in a number of ways. Each day, a different class greets fellow students as they get off the bus and escorts them into the building. A rotating group of students from each homeroom does the morning announcements. Students in third through fifth grades support younger students on the playground and through a structured peer tutoring program where students work together to complete tasks such as recycling. Students with special needs can invite an able friend to join them in specialized instruction activities. Students of all abilities work together to staff the school store located in the cafeteria where students can buy snacks and other items. These mechanisms provide multiple ways students of various abilities can work together and get to know

one another in supportive and friendly ways. This weakens the stigma associated with various levels of ability and strengthens the social norm of acceptance.

Discipline methods

The system for appropriate behavior for children and adults is based on the Henderson's core values of respect, responsibility, determination and inclusiveness. There are clear expectations around how everyone at the Henderson speaks respectfully to one another – children and adults. The goal is that everyone tries to understand the other person's perspective and uses strategies for de-escalating tense situations.

Principal Lampron and teachers attribute the lack of discipline issues at the school to a strong school culture, clear expectations around classroom management and the use of center- and station-based teaching that uses individualize instructional strategies that engage students. Principal Lampron said, "Students do not wander around the classroom and stay on task when they are fully engaged in learning." When issues do come up, teachers and staff rely on various strategies, including redirecting students to other activities and discussing situations in a transparent way that requires students to accept responsibility for actions and make different choices in the future.

For example, if a child rudely tells another child to be quiet, the teacher will have a clear conversation with the first child about helpful and non-helpful behaviors and the importance of being respectful. What could that child do differently next time? If the second child was frustrated or upset, the conversation will center on how the first child could have addressed that need versus the noise. All disciplinary action reinforces the cultural norms of the school.

Principal Lampron said, "Part of the culture here is kids helping kids...fostering natural support versus adult support. It is definitely easier in elementary school than the upper grades...but the culture is to be respectful and friendly – people say hello to each other and talk to each other."

Family engagement

The Henderson has a strong culture of engaging and including families that grew out of the mission of serving children with disabilities. Principal Lampron said, "Parents of children with disabilities have to be their [children's] voices, so they are often engaged at a very high level."[7]

The overarching goal of the Henderson's family engagement program is to show families what their children are learning through activities that include everyone. All school-wide family engagement activities provide "multiple means for action and expression."[8] For example, the school sponsors publishing parties and other events that share student work in ways that include verbal and non-verbal children.

A special needs teacher said, "Some parents have never experienced a non-verbal child before and when they come to a school performance they see what is possible. That has been really powerful and moving. We do some major productions integrating the arts – visual art, music, movement – part of that is for student engagement, but we also do it to engage families"

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[8] P. Lampron, UDL presentation, 2013.

There is an end-of-year celebration of effort and achievement that includes performances and other artistic events that demonstrate the skills and abilities of all students. Extending the norm of respect and inclusivity through the school-wide events shows families of abled and disabled students the type of environment in which their children are learning. The purpose is to demonstrate to families that all students at the Henderson are learning and growing even though they do it in different ways.

Principal Lampron said, "Inclusion isn't a place here. It isn't a concept. It is not even a point of view. Inclusion is more about making people authentic members of classrooms. Families should feel like members of the community – just like all the students."

Specialized and Individualized Instruction

<u>Instructional Model</u>

The instructional model at the Henderson is different than the typical model used to support special needs students in many public schools. A typical model pulls special needs students out of the classroom to receive supports, interrupting their access to instruction and often contributing to their social marginalization. In some schools with large classes, the para-professionals work more closely with special needs students than the classroom teacher. As a result, the para-professionals end up providing a majority of instruction to special needs students instead of the classroom teacher.

Since 1989, as more families have chosen to send their children to the Henderson the classes have steadily grown larger, from a low of 22 to a high of 25. Early in Principal Lampron's tenure, the teaching team thought about how to keep teachers as the primary instructors and use the para-professionals to support learning. The teachers also realized that with such cognitive diversity in their classrooms, the model of whole group instruction was not working well for many students. Inspired by the principles of Universal Design Learning (UDL), teachers started rethinking the school's instructional model.

Instead of substantially separating students from teachers and the classroom, the new model keeps the most qualified personnel (i.e., certified teachers) and effective supports closest to students in the classroom. The teaching team believes this is particularly important for students with special needs.[9] The school no longer has resource rooms – instead students receive ABA, PT and OT services either in their classrooms or in a specially equipped therapy room. Part of the district funds for specialized services are allocated to support this part of the model. The school also moved from whole group instruction to a workshop-model with station- and center-based teaching to individualize instruction. The current instructional model operating at the Henderson includes:[10]

- Two teachers in every classroom
- Average class size 24-25 students to meet demand[11]

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[9] Students receive some supports outside of the classroom, such as elements of occupational and physical therapy.
[10] P. Lampron, UDL presentation, 2013.
[11] The Henderson does not have a naturally occurring population of special needs students, as families are choosing to send their children to the school based on its mission of inclusive education. Once a child is at the Henderson, school leaders are more likely to accept siblings. As a result, there are sometimes up to 25 students in a classroom. The teaching team prefers 22 per classroom, but demand is high so it is difficult to cap class size at that number.

- Each class has five students with significant disabilities, some students with mild/moderate disabilities, and four or five students who might be gifted and talented
- Six para-professionals are used school-wide depending on the needs of students
- Therapists provide majority of services in classrooms to small groups of students

In a typical classroom, there are about 19 general education students (including some students with mild/moderate disabilities and others who are gifted) and five students who require significant time and accommodations for inclusion.[12] The five places saved in each classroom are for students with IEPs that require them to receive more than 2.5 hours a day of special services. The teaching team does not diagnose or select students based on disabilities for the classroom; they just control for numbers.

The staff at the Henderson place students in general education classes according to recommendations from IEP meetings. The parents and IEP team of significantly disabled students must agree that an integrated classroom placement is best for the student to be at the Henderson. In terms of eligibility for special education, the Henderson follows the federal guidelines and tries to do a thorough initial evaluation for each student. Principal Lampron said, "We do not have a lot of initial evaluations since teachers and service providers work together in a monthly student support team to problem solve and recommend interventions. Teachers then track progress to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions." The Henderson follows state law with regard to full inclusion, partial inclusion and full separation.

When Principal Lampron started at the Henderson, there was no weighted student funding in Boston. She chose to continue with the instructional model after the district switched to weighted student funding because she and the teaching team believed it was working well for all students. She views the two teacher instructional model as "budget neutral" because it does not cost more than a typical instructional model serving special needs students through resource rooms, separate lessons and pull-out activities. The leadership team at the Henderson argues that they choose to allocate the money differently to sustain the two teachers, paraprofessionals and supports in the classroom.

Universal Design Learning Principles

"I think the most important instructional practice that all of the teachers here at the Henderson use is basing our lessons on the principals of Universal Design," said one third grade teacher.

Universal Design Learning (UDL) principles are a major influence on all aspects of instruction and school culture at the Henderson. UDL is based off of a set of three principles created from neuroscience research on how people learn. These principles guide curriculum development and strive to "provide all individuals equal opportunities to learn."[13] The principles offer "a blueprint for creating instructional goals, methods, materials, and assessments that work for everyone. not a

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[12] Significant needs students include those who are medically fragile, with severe autism, significant cognitive delays, visual and auditory needs, multiple significant needs, etc.

[13] The information on UDL was retrieved from the CAST website at http://www.cast.org/udl/index.html on October 12, 2013.

single, one-size-fits-all solution but rather flexible approaches that can be customized and adjusted for individual needs."[14] The three guiding UDL principles are:

- "Provide multiple means of representation (the "what" of learning)
- Provide multiple means of action and expression (the "how" of learning)
- Provide multiple means of engagement (the "why" of learning)"[15]

Some of the UDL elements at the Henderson include:

- Center- and station-based teaching
- Small group/Tiered support
- Before/After school support
- Use of technology as a learning tool for all students

For example, Henderson students often start their classroom lesson in a large group. The teacher provides a mini-lesson or presentation and then the students break into small groups. In small groups, students spend a majority of their learning time working on various activities that involve reading, writing, problem-solving, computing, investigating, creating, etc. During this time, students receive tiered support from the teacher, other support staff in the classroom, peers and various forms of adaptive technology. The lesson ends with students sharing out in the large group. This center- and station-based approach is highly individualized and more effectively meets the needs of all students, including those with special needs. Additionally, students use technology that supports and challenges each child individually and in small groups at their skill level.

The use of technology as a learning tool has been a huge support for helping all students master concepts, content and learning at their own pace. Principal Lampron and others believe that the use of technology is a critical UDL-influenced strategy for improving delivery of individualized instruction and better accommodations for student learning. Effectively using technology as a learning tool in the classroom is another key element of strong instruction at the school.

Use of technology in the classroom

A few years ago, the teaching team decided to break down the computer lab and move computers into the classroom to provide more small-group and tiered-support for students. In a typical Henderson classroom, there are five desktop computers, two laptops, and two iPads. There is an iPad cart shared throughout the school and in grades K -5 there are Smartboards in every room through which students follow web-based reading and math programs.

The school does not have a special budget for technology. To support Universal Design Learning and technology, the leadership team used money originally allocated for supplies to upgrade computers and applied for grants and partnerships to purchase additional software and hardware. They also used some of the district money they received to support students with disabilities along with sourcing and applying for external grants and supports.

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[14] Ibid.
[15] The three principles of UDL were retrieved from the UDL center website at http://www.udlcenter.org/aboutudl/whatisudl/3principles on October 12, 2013.

Through various online and software programs, teachers provide highly individualized instruction to students who work through the lessons at their own pace. The teaching team first looks at all students' strengths and what barriers exist that prevent them from accessing the curriculum. The teachers then try to minimize the barriers for all students. Teachers monitor student performance on hand held devices, noting when students show signs of confusion or misunderstanding, and assist students directly. Students with certain disabilities – as well as those without – use web-based non-fiction reading programs, text-to-speech, prompting software and other adaptive technologies to continue developing literacy and math skills.

A third grade teacher said:

> I love programs that the students can use to practice a skill and that also tracks the kids' performance. There are so many free programs or ones you can download for maybe $10 or $15 that are linked to Common Core Standards...The students can practice concepts and skills and [the programs] give instant feedback that I can follow on a live feed on my iPad or phone... I can see every child that's logged on and the percentage that they're getting right or wrong. So, if in a station, maybe the child is getting a lot of questions wrong, I can go over and ask, 'Can I help you with this?' So, there's an accountability there which I really like and they are still able to guide their own learning.

Learning at the Henderson may look very different from student to student in one classroom. However, all of the students are still working on the same skill and their learning is directly linked to the same Common Core Standards. They just might be doing it in different ways - through assistive technology or direct reading - depending on their learning style.

Collaboration and Problem Solving

Principal Lampron and other leaders at the school have worked together to create mechanisms and systems for teachers to collaborate and problem solve on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. Key tools and systems identified by the principal and staff that are critical to collaboration, problem solving and helping them improve and support student learning and growth include:

- Scheduled time for teacher collaboration
- 6 week data cycles including the use of ANet and data meetings
- Clear expectations regarding lesson planning
- School-wide use of an on-line planbook (planbookedu.com)

<u>Scheduled time for collaboration and communication</u>

Teachers were concerned that there was not enough time in the school schedule for them to review data, collaborate and create action plans, and problem solve around issues of instruction and student learning. In response, Principal Lampron revised the schedule to allow more time on a monthly, weekly and daily basis for teachers to meet in several configurations and for various purposes. Currently, opportunities for collaboration and communication include:

- Vertical team instructional rounds twice a month
- Monthly professional development meetings, Instructional Leadership Team meetings and consults with service providers
- Weekly grade level team and staff meetings
- Daily co-planning period and grade level teams often have lunch together

The protocols and processes that the teachers created in 2009-2010 are used to focus and guide the meetings and increase productivity. A fourth-grade teacher said:

> In our meetings we say, 'Here is what we are doing to teach [this concept] and this is how our kids are doing.' We all review the classroom observations and student data and work together on our grade level teams [2nd-5th grades]. Then we bring the discussion to ILT. In ILT meetings, we look at what does effective literacy instruction look like – what does the classroom look like, what are the students doing, what are the teachers doing, what are the support staff doing, what do we do when kids aren't achieving, what do we do when students aren't decoding properly – we are outlining this and having tough conversations. For example, someone might say 'I teach fourth grade and when they get to us many don't know how to write a response' so that means it isn't completely on the 3rd grade teachers... it is also on the 2nd and 1st....We are forced to ask, 'Well, what are we doing here' – this problem didn't just happen. It developed over time.

The main focus of collaboration and problem solving is on student learning, behavior and social growth. The school culture at the Henderson is maturing and these meetings provide the safe space and psychological safety necessary for engaging in honest, challenging and rewarding discussions necessary to truly collaborate and problem solve to improve student learning. This culture took a few years to build and is linked to the organic and internal process the teachers went through when learning to look at student data, talk about it and use it to meaningfully inform instruction.

For example, the teaching team used the protocols they created to guide classroom observations during instructional rounds so they could better define what they thought was successful teaching and why. Eventually, teachers were more comfortable with using evidence and data to support their arguments and to challenge the "culture of nice" that operated at the school. Principal Lampron set the tone of accountability with a dash of humor to soften the discussions early on through her consistent presence at meetings, facilitating dialogue and modeling the types of discussion the teachers needed to have about instruction to improve student learning at the school.

Principal Lampron said, "It is all about what is best for the children. Some teachers did not feel comfortable...no one quit, but some people decided to retire a little earlier. Most of the teachers eventually saw the results of our processes and how it could help strengthen their teaching and student learning."

<u>Data cycles</u>

The Henderson starts it data cycles and instructional rounds in October and completes six in a year in grades two through five. The goal is to implement data cycles for all grades. The school currently uses ANet interim assessments for their data cycles. The key steps in a single cycle are captured in the graphic below.

<u>Chart 1: Henderson six week data cycle</u>[16]
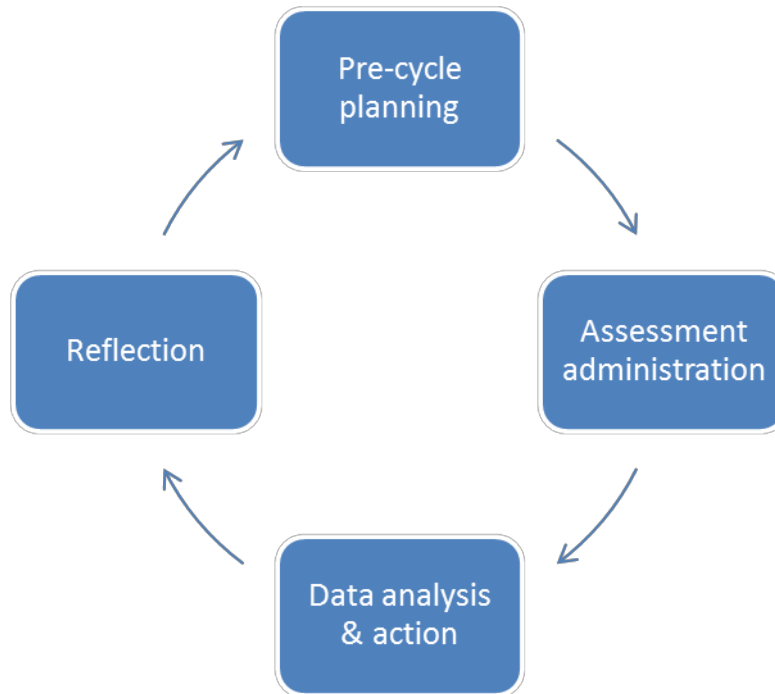
At the beginning of each cycle, the teaching team completes the pre-cycle planning steps and then administers ANet's formative assessments. The teachers review the data for each student in grade level teams during common planning time (and sometimes in vertical teams and at ILT meetings). During the meetings, the teachers bring their initial test results and a draft of their action plan. They discuss data from assessments and instructional rounds and collaborate to incorporate the information into the action plans to re-teach concepts, knowledge and skill areas in which the student struggled. "Re-teaching" does not mean teaching the concept or skill the same way again; it means teaching the concept or skill a variety of different and creative ways until the students learns it. Teachers then reassess the student and reflect on the process, identifying what they did differently that resulted in improved learning. They use the online planbook to record changes in lesson plans, which are stored electronically and can be used to inform planning in subsequent years.

One teacher said, "We think about what worked and what didn't work and problem solve about how to teach the students better. I like it because it's an informal forum where we can sit and just talk about practices. I like being able to talk with my colleagues because when you're teaching this,

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[16] P. Lampron, UDL presentation, 2013.

there's so little time to be able to chat...so, I love that we have that time structured to be able to reflect with each other."

Principal Lampron said:

> I think in a cycle of data one of the best things we do is reflect. Did it work? Did it not work? Could it work for others? And we don't reflect individually... we reflect collectively in grade level teams and in vertical teams. We use protocols we designed for the best use of time... I try to honor the teachers' time by scheduling meetings that are lengthy enough to dig deeply into the results and look for patterns and correlate the patterns with the standards – three hours at a time. I am paying the teachers extra PD money – two in school days and one before school....I try to analyze the data with the teachers. I want to know where they are with action plans and really know what is happening in the classroom. I need to know the data as well or better than they do.

A fifth grade teacher said:

> After we started using ANet, I saw more clearly that there were specific groups of children in my classroom. There were children that definitely got it, there some who possibly got it, there were some children that really needed help...I realized that if I'm teaching a whole group mini-lesson, I'm teaching to the middle of the class. Some kids are going to be checked out because this is boring for them, some kids are going to be checked out because it's beyond what they can do, and I really was only getting about eight to nine in the classroom...I wanted to make sure I was really helping the kids access the curriculum exactly where they were. The data cycles and ANet assessments really helped me do that. I can't imagine not having them now.

Scheduled data cycles, strong school cultural norms around how to use data to inform instruction, and clear processes and steps have helped the Henderson incorporate the information from data cycles directly into their instructional practices and school culture. Principal Lampron's strong leadership in guiding the teaching team to create the mechanisms, structures and processes were critical to the Henderson's success.

Lesson planning and preparation tools

Since 2010, the Henderson teachers have used two core tools to guide lesson planning and preparation. One is a document created through a participatory process that outlines expectations and essential components of written lesson plans for both general and special education teachers. The other is an online system called PlanbookEDU that supports planning efforts across grade level teams and subject areas (Exhibit 2).

The online planbook is like a traditional planbook, but it exists electronically. The teachers use the expectation document to guide what they put in the lesson book. For every content area, the teacher can plan for accommodations and modifications for individual students. Accommodation schedules and documents can be attached and Common Core Standards are part of a drop-down menu that is linked to a lesson goal field. The application imbeds the Common Core Standards at the top of each daily lesson box in a thin grey bar. The user can click on the bar and the standards that the daily lesson is linked with appear. As a result, the electronic planbook offers a clear and simple way to link daily lesson plans with specific Common Core Standards.

Because the planbook is online, it allows teachers a flexible, systematic and convenient way to co-plan and share with others, as they can access the tool from any wireless location. The tool saves lessons from one year to the next, including notes and comments, which help teachers plan more easily and provides continuity. At the Henderson, the teachers share the planbook with Principal Lampron and their teaching teams. Anyone with access can provide feedback and contribute to the plan. For example, some grade level teams divide planning among themselves. Sometimes one person plans all of the accommodations and another does all of the planning for ELA. If that approach works for the team, they continue co-planning this way.

The teaching team phased in use of the application over two years. During the first year, teachers shared their online planning with the Principal to pilot the system. This also provided the Principal with an opportunity to directly coach teachers on instruction through her comments and feedback. During the second year, they decided to share the book among grade team members to co-plan and coordinate instruction. Teachers decided school-wide what features they wanted and how to align it with the expectations documents. Now, grade level teams share the planbook with therapists and specialists so that everyone who needs to know what is happening for a specific student or in the classroom on a given day has access. This also offers an additional layer of accountability in terms of what is actually happening in the classroom.

A teacher said, "I love our online plan book for so many reasons, and saving lessons from year to year is definitely one of them. Oftentimes, I wondered, 'How did I teach that last year?' I can go back and look at how... For example, if I'm teaching estimation I know what I'm going to do in my teacher log station, but what was I giving them as an independent or as a technology based station? So, I want to look and see what I've done because there are so many different options I want to make sure I'm doing it systematically...and it's nice that I have that log from the previous year."

Moving Forward

Student learning at the Henderson is improving and the mechanisms, systems and processes put in place by Lampron and her team have resulted in steadily increasing student outcomes on MCAS tests and interim assessments. Principal Lampron said, "Our growth is messy...look at the charts...but the trend is up... we are steadily trending upward."

An ongoing challenge is providing continual support to ALL students' learning with a focus on literacy, while linking instructional practice and student achievement to Common Core standards and measurements. The teaching team continues to refine the systems and tools they generated to improve student learning, and remain vigilant and creative problem solvers. An immediate challenge is creating and implementing an instruction plan for a K-12 system of schools to build a pipeline for families who want to keep their children in an inclusion environment like the one at the Henderson.

Through the strong leadership and clear vision of Principal Lampron and the leadership and commitment of the teachers, the instructional practice and school culture of the Henderson continues to grow and improve. Even though there are powerful systems, processes and mechanisms that are focused on improving instruction at the Henderson, students learn more than the core academic subjects. They also internalize the importance of respect, responsibility, determination and inclusion. A Henderson student said, "I know that in life everybody does not share the same abilities, but all people are of great value. My friends with disabilities are some of the best friends I've made. Without the Henderson I would not have met these people."[17]

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[17] Johnson, M. (Producer). (2013). *Dr. William W. Henderson Inclusion School* [Online video]. United States: YouTube.

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<u>Exhibit 1a</u>: Sample Instructional Rounds planning meeting agenda (Session 1, September 2010)

Dr. William Henderson Inclusion Elementary School
Instructional Rounds
Session 1
AGENDA

❖ Introduction
  ▪ Our practice 09/10
    • observations
❖ Context

    o What will we work on/why?
    o What do we hope to achieve?
    o How long will we work together?
    o In what ways will we work together?

❖ Norm setting
    o Behavioral guidelines
    o Learning from one another
    o How to treat others' ideas
    o How to push thinking
    o Confidentiality

❖ Instructional Core
    o Review

❖ Mission Statement

    Humility does not mean you think less of yourself; it means you think of yourself less.

Exhibit 1b: **Sample Instructional Rounds agenda to guide classroom observations (October 2010)**

Instructional Rounds
General Education Teachers
October 26, 2010
AGENDA
Focus: Instructional Core
(Teachers, Students and Content)

Observations in Classrooms: "Focus on Students"
Observe in 2 different classrooms for 15 minutes each:
(1) Grade 1-3
(1) Grade 4-5

Guiding Question:
What evidence do you see/hear that students know what they are learning?

Some questions to ask students:
What are you learning? What are you working on?
What do you do if you don't know an answer or get stuck?
How will you know when you're finished?
How will you know if you've done a good job?

Debrief
Write down 4 descriptions of what you saw on sticky notes

Analysis
What patterns do you see?

Prediction
If you were a student in this school and you did what you were expected to do, what would you know and be able to do?

Next Level of Work
What's the next level of work and what support do teachers need to move instruction to the next level?

A boat doesn't go forward if each one is rowing their own way.
Swahili proverb