

Academic Growth: Best Practices and Small Group Discussions
Performance Matters Forum 2019 Session in Riverside 15, 11:30 am - 12:45 pm

This interactive session features invited guests from six districts/schools demonstrating strong Smarter Balanced academic growth. Session attendees will have the opportunity to participate in three small group discussions led by the invited district and school representatives. All discussion leaders identified a few keys to their success in achieving sustained growth. Those points are listed below so that participants can select in advance three discussion groups to join.

GROUP 1

Lauren Bernachhia, a Grade 5 teacher at **John Barry Elementary School in Meriden**, and Patti Sullivan Kowalski, Senior Director of Student Supports and Special Education, will discuss how John Barry transitioned from Turnaround status to a National Blue Ribbon School by focusing on the following key practices:

- A student-centered approach that provides voice & choice;
- Embedded digital content with explicit learning targets;
- Small group instruction aligned to Smarter Balanced rigor & test-taking strategies; and
- PLC meetings to analyze data, create effective instructional strategies, and determine next steps.

GROUP 2

Jennifer DeRagon serves as the principal of **George Hersey Robertson School**, a Grades 3-5 school in **Coventry**. This school was featured in the [June 2019 edition](#) of *Performance Matters*. Jennifer will share her school's coordinated approach to sustaining growth through careful adjustments to curriculum that incorporate the language of Smarter Balanced, responsive and timely changes to instruction, and a thoughtful assessment plan that uses interim assessment blocks. Jennifer will also explain how structures in place in her school and district facilitate this work.

GROUP 3

A team from **Waterford** comprised of Assistant Superintendent Craig Powers, **Clark Lane Middle School** Principal James Sachs, and Mathematics Instructional Coach Rob Cillino will discuss their recent strong improvement in math achievement and growth across all grade levels. They attribute their success to a shift in teaching and learning in the classroom facilitated by the implementation of a new, researched math program (Illustrative Math), a very focused and effective coaching model centered around significant time devoted to refining practice, and the strategic use of data.

GROUP 4

Liz Dumond and Michele Lathrop serve as Elementary Instructional Math Coaches in **Montville**. They will share their keys to improving mathematics instruction and student achievement in their district, which includes:

- District-wide implementation of Eureka Math in 2014-15;
- Embedded professional development by coaches centered on improved classroom instruction;
- Establishing consistency in cross grade level strategies, models, and math language K-8;
- Grade level math PLC meetings held every 6-8 weeks with coaches, teachers, and administrators at all grade levels K-5; and
- No separate intervention program or pull out from whole classroom instruction.

GROUP 5

Cori-Ann DiMaggio, Director of Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment for **Regional School District 13** will focus on the importance of systems, structures, and coherence. Cori-Ann has identified a set of best practices in the following areas:

- Culture of Shared Leadership;
- Data Literacy;
- Curriculum;
- Targeted professional learning;
- Shared Instructional Practices; and
- Celebrating Success.

GROUP 6

Caroline Messenger, Director of Curriculum for **Naugatuck Public Schools**, identifies the biggest driver of change in her district as their commitment to changing instructional practices through programmatic change, curricular change, and equity work across the district. This includes a Humanities curriculum K-6 (and soon to move into 7-12) that has been designed using culturally relevant pedagogy for the students they serve. They have made a commitment to competency-based learning and developed high level competencies for each academic subject and created scoring guides that teachers use as rubrics when assessing student work. This work is predicated on a comprehensive Vision of the Graduate. This has provided coherence and consistency among schools in Naugatuck and sparked conversations about the competencies and the standards they are based upon.