

## **From Appalachia to Australia Plan for Implementation**

By: Kathleen Baker, Angie Fondale, and Kristen Lavric

Through visits to numerous classrooms, we observed a great deal about how Quality Learning works. After taking time to absorb and reflect on what we learned, we have started to make changes in our own classrooms. To help us better implement our version of Quality Learning, we have identified several significant areas to address, including procedures, process, matrices, and flexibility.

Procedures and process are a key component to Quality Learning. Just as important is the students having a voice in those procedures and processes. One tool that we are implementing this school year is the "Y Chart". This chart identifies what an expectation looks like, feels like, and sounds like. For example, the expectation of "Being On Task" looks like students working, sounds like academic conversations, and feels like a sense of accomplishment. Another way the students have a voice is in the 7th grade rules and expectations. We worked through this process by taking students' suggestions and ideas first, and then they voted to determine the final five rules. Having specific procedures and process allows more time to be focused on learning instead of instructing students what to do next and how to behave.

Additionally, we will continue to use capacity matrices to help students take ownership of their learning. One thing we observed as critically important was consistency. As a result, our 7<sup>th</sup> grade team has developed a universal matrix template. All teachers agreed on the basic structure of the matrix, regardless of content. This allows students to "learn" the matrix structure once and spend more time focusing on the content

included in each matrix. In addition to developing consistent matrices, we also plan to help our students self-assess their level(s) of understanding through the matrix. Students will do this upon receiving a matrix for the first time, as they learn material, and upon mastery of the unit. This helps students identify strengths and areas of weakness, but also allows them to see growth.

The final major component of Quality Learning is flexibility in both our space and our structure. Flexibility is key in allowing students to spend more time on subjects that they struggle in, and less time on subjects they excel in. Why require a student to work on something for 40 minutes if he/she can master it in 20? This flexibility works towards their strengths and weaknesses, and allows them to become successful in all content areas. Thus far, we have been especially flexible in our structure. Students are currently confined to individual classrooms, but they have the flexibility to meet with other teachers as necessary. If a student in the Language Arts classroom has mastered all Language Arts learning targets, he/she may work on math. If he/she has a question in math, he/she may go ask the math teacher for help. Through this flexibility, we are seeing many students become successful in all their content areas, instead of just the ones they naturally excel in.

As we have started to focus on processes, procedures, matrices, and flexibility, we have experienced a range of struggles and successes. We have worked together as a team to continually find opportunities in problems. As we continue to implement Quality Learning, we evolve and grow. It is, without doubt, an exciting time for us as teachers and for our students.