

EXAMPLES OF PBI™ VISIT TEAM CONCLUSIONS

The value of an analysis ultimately stands or falls on the quality, relevance and integrity of its content. This is a content-driven task, to be evaluated by its success in assisting thinking about substance. (Thanks to Edward Tufte. *Beautiful Evidence*. Graphics Press, 2006. Pages 122-139.)

1. Students are not learning mathematics at a deep level. They use imprecise language to discuss mathematical concepts, and their discussion focuses on procedures. Students learn basic skills, but they do not know how to use them in real and changing contexts. For example, middle school students know how to compute basic operations in fractions, decimals and proportion at great speed, but they lack knowledge of how these operations are connected, and they do not understand the underlying mathematical constructs or their purpose. Students in the high school learn a different set of skills than those they learned in middle school, yet they also lack knowledge of the connections among operations, and they do not understand the underlying mathematical constructs or their purpose. Additionally, they are not able to apply middle school skills to new situations; for example, students are unable to use ratios in science class or in math class to simplify rational expressions. Their test scores in math skills are well below the state norms. (reviewing student work; observing classes; talking with teachers and students; meeting with instructional leaders and principal; reviewing state test scores; reviewing quarterly outlines)
2. Teachers do a great job involving their students in a variety of authentic writing experiences across the curriculum. Several examples include on-demand tasks, journals, narratives, scripts, reports, and persuasive writing. The students' impressive command of writing conventions is easily identifiable in these products. Many teachers effectively use exemplars and rubrics that provide students with clear expectations and a framework for how they should organize their writing. They give students numerous opportunities to revise and reflect. However, teachers have inconsistent expectations about what they expect in the quality of student writing. For example, some teachers do not expect students to support their ideas with compelling evidence. Students complete their assignments, but teachers do not always assess the quality of their work. Typically, they just check that the student has finished the assignment. A few parents and students express similar concerns that teachers tend to focus on the quantity, rather than the quality, of students' writing. (following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, and parents, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments)
3. The strong leadership of Beavertail High School serves as a cohesive bond that focuses the school community on its common mission. The principal is described by all members of the school community as a "visionary leader" who guides his staff and has the same passion for student learning, as do the teachers. The SALT Team observed that the focus and passion for student learning and achievement begins in the principal's office and emanates throughout the school. The principal establishes an expectation for excellence and works with the rest of the administrative team to anticipate problems and proactively find and implement solutions. The administrators empower the entire faculty and staff to be equal partners in promoting student success. They know their staff and their students, and they create a level of communication and personalization that establishes a culture of cooperation, learning, and achievement. (following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing district and school policies and practices, BHS Self-Study)