



Preliminary Evaluation Report

NeXt Generation Teacher

Summer Institute

August 31, 2005

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The purpose of this brief study was to evaluate a Summer Institute designed to prepare NeXt Generation Teachers (NGTs) for their roles in supporting the overall NeXt Generation Strategic Vision in Sarasota County Schools. The summer institute spanned three weeks, July 11 – 29, 2005. The purpose of the 2005 Summer Institute was to give 50 NeXt Generation Teachers selected from schools with grades 9 – 12 a foundation of knowledge and skills, enabling them *to develop their own classrooms* to more closely match the characteristics of the NeXt Generation classroom.

The following topics were addressed in the Institute: **Week 1:** Data calibration for the EAR Protocol; one day each for *engagement, alignment, and rigor*; one day for integration/application. **Week 2:** Standards-based lessons, technology, assessments, project-based learning, technology breakouts. **Week 3:** Project-based learning, Kagan cooperative learning, technology integration, Trakker Plus!, technology breakouts.

Results

Data from surveys, observations, discussion/debriefings and products describe an institute of generally high quality with respect to presenters, instructional activities/environment, and support during the training sessions. The institute topics, for the most part, proved to be relevant, even critically needed in the view of many participants. The Summer Institute was designed to prepare NGTs for their new roles and the task of redesigning instruction in their own classrooms. In that respect, the Institute was successful. A large majority of teachers left the institute feeling prepared to implement a large part of the material presented (with support). Transfer of skills and strategies into classroom practice was enhanced through several opportunities during the institute to develop lesson plans, develop/present a final project, and a solidifying of content through collaborative feedback and the use of rubrics and quality protocols. These comments taken together seem to create at least a **moderately high level of readiness** on the part of NGTs to implement these strategies and to fulfill their roles in advancing the goals of NeXt Generation Learning during the 2005-2006 school year.

Based on a limited number of interviews and a few intercepted communications, **the fragility of this readiness is beginning to be tested** for NGTs at this time (August 31). This is not necessarily an indication of a major problem, and may be expected as the challenges of a new school year and the inertia of past practice tend to overwhelm the NGTs available time and energy.

The level of support for these teachers will need to be extraordinary in the early weeks/months of implementation, including the delivery of promised tools/technology, and technology support. One reason behind this conclusion is the extraordinary level of support that was provided during the Institute. Teachers had teams of expert presenters, networked communications, a continuous feedback/correction process, accessible and cordial collaborators, and a limited number of tasks to do well. Now they are back in school, working in one of the most traditional and immovable institutions in the U.S., and

they are expected *to innovate*. The NGTs need reasonable, *consistent and frequent support* – from the district curriculum/professional development/accountability team, from the district technology team, and from their local school administrators. Many proven change models also indicate the need for two additional components: (1) continued *pressure* and *clarification of expectations* and goals for the year, and (2) *periodic feedback* on how they are doing.

Recommendations (abbreviated)

- 1.** The district instructional technology office should make every effort to **deliver and set up technology equipment and systems** according to the original schedule. As importantly, the district (possibly in cooperation with school-based technology specialists) should insure that NGTs have needed support for **set-up and testing of each system** to confirm smooth operation.
- 2.** An overall **strategic plan** for NeXt Generation Teachers should be developed and communicated to all involved staff. This plan should specify *goals/products, feedback mechanisms, and support*.
- 3.** As a complement to the strategic plan in #2, an **overall management/coordinating mechanism** needs to be specified. For example, one person should be designated as the *manager of the NGT project*, and a coordinating team should be identified which *includes school principals*.
- 4.** The **collaborative project-based learning unit** and/or **lesson planning** unit should be a primary focus of the implementation support provided to NGTs, where district staff, principals, and IRRE/consultants can provide goals/plans clarification, feedback, and support/recognition.
- 5.** Two other areas from the institute emerge from the data as needing support and reinforcement. The first is **cooperative learning**, which has emerged as the most likely and most straightforward innovation to implement (or to refine) for many NGTs. This practice has a very high potential for successful implementation. **Engagement, alignment and rigor (EAR)** should also be an area of focus for several reasons: (1) its potential impact on instruction, as a pervasive strategy and benchmark for the other components, (2) the technical and practical complexity of its application, and (3) because of its dual roles as an *evaluative tool* and as a *developmental tool*.
- 6.** Several suggestions relating to the institute **schedule and design** emerged consistently from participants' comments: breaking the institute into **shorter sessions**, building in a **break** before the start of school, utilizing a **lead facilitator** for the Weeks 2 & 3 material, utilizing small **group/table facilitators**, and **integrating components** such as EAR, project-based learning, cooperative learning, and standards-based lessons.
- 7.** Incorporate into the institute more intentional opportunities to link NGT components to the **Smaller Learning Community (SLC)** and **career/workplace preparation** initiatives in high school (e.g., career academies, real-world immersion).

Introduction/Background

The purpose of this brief study was to evaluate a Summer Institute designed to prepare NeXt Generation Teachers (NGTs) for their roles in supporting the overall NeXt Generation Strategic Vision in Sarasota County Schools. The summer institute spanned three weeks, July 11 – 29, 2005. Certain events leading up to and following the Institute will be included in the review, ending August 31, 2005. The Summer Institute and initial NeXt Generation teacher training focused on **high schools** only.

The NeXt Generation Strategic Vision focuses on five pillars that provide the “focus and the foundation for structure and strategies from which we build success.” Those pillars include *quality, people, service, resources* and *safety*, all aimed at supporting student success.

Vision Statement: *What is Next Generation Learning? It is a vision of education that adapts to today’s reality and tomorrow’s needs. It acknowledges changes in our economy, our workplace, our world. It embraces the next generation, with its diverse face, digital upbringing and independent thinking. It treats every child as an individual, every educator as a professional, and every parent as a customer. It requires total community support, while holding the school district accountable to taxpayers. It represents a new direction, a new hope, a commitment to the success of every child and a promising future for an effective, efficient organization. ([NeXt Generation Learning](#), SCSB, 2005)*

The strategic vision most closely addresses the NeXt Generation teachers’ roles through the following descriptors of the NeXt Generation classroom.

- Learning is **active**, rather than passive
- Students will **construct knowledge**, rather than receiving knowledge only
- Students (and adults) will **learn together**, rather than alone or separate from other students
- Students will **learn to learn** (become lifelong learners), rather than simply learning content
- Students will **learn to innovate**, rather than replicating or reciting given knowledge
- Teachers will **adapt to differing learning styles**, rather than teaching all students using the same format or methods

The purpose of the 2005 Summer Institute was to give NeXt Generation Teachers a foundation of knowledge and skills, enabling them *to develop their own classrooms* to more closely match the characteristics above. A list of [15 competencies](#) was provided by the district, representing implementation goals for the next 5 years for all Sarasota County teachers. That list was referenced as the context for NeXt Generation Teacher training.

NeXt Generation Teachers (NGT)

Fifty (50) teachers were selected from nine (9) schools that serve students in grades 9 – 12. Cyesis, Oak Park, and Phoenix academy participated with one or two teachers each. Booker, Riverview, Sarasota, and Venice High schools participated with 8-9 teachers each; Pine View and North Port High participated with 4 and 6 teachers, respectively. Most teachers identified themselves as mathematics (10), English (7) or Science (7) teachers. In addition to subject area teachers, participants with assignments as data coaches, technology specialists, and literacy coaches participated, along with one Smaller Learning Community school-wide coordinator. These special areas represented 9 of the 50 teachers.

Institute Format and Content

The Summer Institute of three weeks included sessions from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., five days per week. The institute format was designed to model the [EAR](#) (engagement, alignment and rigor) protocol offered by [IRRE](#) (Institute for Research and Reform in Education), the consulting group that provided the first week's training. The room arrangement for the institute allowed for continuous collaboration among participants, both in small groups and as a total learning community. Many of the institute objectives were modeled overall: cooperative learning (delivered by [Kagan Professional Development](#) during week 3), project-based learning, and technology integration.

The method of learning for the three weeks included numerous opportunities for hands-on development of products, collaboration with peers, feedback and revision utilizing rubrics, group presentations incorporating technology, and developing products for incorporation in instruction. Technology was infused throughout the institute to demonstrate hardware and software for student use, for presentation, and as a production and communication tool for participants (each NGT received a laptop computer, all of which were networked through the district's [Blackboard](#) Employee portal and [BBS](#) via wireless connections).

Presenters/Trainers: The institute was delivered by several teams of trainers, including IRRE, Kagan Professional Development, Kathleen Harris (curriculum standards), David Thornburg (technology integration), a team of district staff from curriculum, research/evaluation, and professional development, and a team of staff from the instructional technology department, who also provided logistical support for the technology hardware/software/network. At several points during the workshop, presentations were made by Gary Norris, Superintendent and Lori White, Associate Superintendent. At one point, individual School Board members attended as observers and were introduced. Throughout the three weeks, principals and assistant principals from most of the schools visited and spent time with their teams.

Content/Objectives of the Institute: The institute addressed the following topics, with learning objectives and practice/product requirements for each. Each participant was provided a 3-ring binder containing an agenda, contact information, readings,

exercises and forms. In addition, Web links were provided on the Blackboard Website, along with links to the discussion board, district and IRRE resources. Numerous handouts were provided throughout the institute to be added to these binders.

- **Week 1:** Data calibration for the EAR protocol; one day each for *engagement*, *alignment*, and *rigor*; one day for integration/application
- **Week 2:** Standards-based lessons, technology, assessments, project-based learning, technology breakouts
- **Week 3:** Project-based learning, Kagan cooperative learning, technology integration, Trakker Plus!, technology breakouts

In addition, institute sessions were devoted to the NeXt Generation Strategic Vision, roles and goals for year 1. Several sessions were interspersed throughout the institute on lesson planning and development w/critique, collaborative team planning, project presentations, technology breakout sessions, and opportunities to provide feedback to the presentation teams via class discussion, discussion boards, and Web surveys.

Evaluation Questions

Evaluation questions were focused on overall success of the NeXt Generation Teacher project, not just the 3-week summer institute. The evaluation design was guided by the Florida DOE *Professional Development Evaluation Protocols*, focusing primarily on planning and delivery, with some attempt to glean information on follow-up. This report will focus on preliminary events in the context of the longer-term project. Each question contains a [link](#) to that section under *Results and Discussion*.

1. How did NGT teachers rate institute training sessions on indicators of [quality](#)?
2. How did NGT teachers rate institute training sessions on indicators of [effectiveness](#)?
3. Did NGT teachers perceive the institute as being [relevant](#) to their needs and the needs of their schools?
4. Do NGT teachers feel [prepared](#) to implement new skills and practices in their classrooms?
5. Are NGT teachers clear on the district's [expectations](#) for their roles in implementing new skills and practices?
6. How appropriate are the [tools, materials, and technology](#) provided that teachers will need to support implementation of new skills and practices?
7. How do teachers perceive the [level of support](#) for their new roles and tasks from (1) district personnel and (2) their school administration?

Study Method

Several strategies and data collection tools were employed during the period from July 1 – August 31, 2005, including:

- interviews with several high school principals and district administrators (in June and again in August)
- review of training design and related NeXt Generation documents
- attendance during institute sessions for 8 of the 15 days, for 1-2 hours per day
- attendance and participation in end-of-day debriefing sessions with institute presenters for 5-6 institute days
- review of discussion board postings and “+ Δ” charts from participant discussions
- review of participant and team products produced during sessions
- random discussions with and eavesdropping on participant conversations during group work
- review of Web survey results from three (3) administrations: week 1, end of institute, and needs assessment. *Note*: 44 – 45 participants responded to surveys. Copies of survey results are included in the hard copy version only of this report.
- on-site interviews with selected NGTs during the 2nd – 4th week of school (8 teachers at 5 high schools)

In addition to the discussion below, *formative evaluation* comments were shared on several occasions with the IRRE/district training/design team during the first week. These observations/recommendations will not be repeated in this report, but may be reviewed in [Appendix 2](#).

Results and Discussion

Quality and effectiveness of the 3-week training institute - Week 1:
IRRE/Engagement, Alignment and Rigor (EAR): At the end of Week 1, **68%** of respondents rated the week as “excellent” or “very good.” An additional 25% (totaling **93%**) rated the week as “good.” On the last day of Week 3, the “good – excellent” rating for Week 1 was selected by only 76% of respondents. No one rated the week as “poor” on either survey administration. Of 40 written comments about the week, 26 were positive, 11 were critical, and 3 simply provided information. Nearly all included minor suggestions for improvement. Participants rated how well the presenters modeled E/A/R each day. Average ratings for “good – excellent” for the week were **86%** for

engagement, **91%** for alignment and **88%** for rigor. Participants “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that “this week’s topics were of value to me” (**97%**), and “the atmosphere was conducive to learning” (**95%**). In the comments section, **engagement** was mentioned far more often than the other two topics as being “most meaningful,” which may be partly attributable to the engagement techniques employed by the presenter for that session. The **fine tuning/lesson refining** activities were also mentioned throughout the comment section as being valuable and meaningful, attributable to (1) the collaborative process and (2) the ability to work a topic from beginning to end – incorporating various pieces into a whole.

Participant comments provided no **consistent indication of problems** with the delivery of the first week’s material. The Next Generation Teachers did not hesitate to provide detailed feedback on all aspects of the workshop; they also indicated an awareness and appreciation of the presenters’ interest in their feedback and their willingness to make changes based on participant input. Specific criticisms in one direction (e.g. to pick up the pace) were generally balanced by comments in the other direction (e.g., needing more time for reflection). Comments which did seem to recur in from several feedback sources included:

- a lack of **clarity and continuity** at times
- somewhat long or dry **lectures/presentations** at times
- tentativeness on the part of the IRRE presentation team with respect to instruments and protocols (giving the impression that these are **not proven tools** with a track record of reliability statistics)

Quality and effectiveness - Weeks 2 & 3: Standards-based Lessons, Assessments, Project-based Learning, Cooperative Learning, Collaborative Project Planning/Presentation: A Final Evaluation survey was administered via Web on the last day of the institute, with a primary focus on weeks 2 & 3. The final survey did not contain objective questions about quality/presentation, but numerous comments on the survey indicate the following reactions:

- Participants appreciated getting to know the administrative and technology staff from the Landings. Positive comments were found throughout the Discussion Board, survey comment sections, and + Δ charts citing the **competence, teamwork and genuine level of support** extended by the district staff during the second 2 weeks and throughout the institute.
- Reactions to the **Cooperative Learning** sessions were generally positive. Many suggestions were made, including the need for a more advanced design for the high school audience, and integrating the training with EAR strategy training. This topic is also rated highest in participants feeling “prepared to use ... in my classroom” (**78%**; **98%** with peer support); also, 15 participants noted Cooperative Learning/Kagan as the most meaningful session/activity.

- Participants were asked how prepared they were to implement the strategies presented during weeks 2 & 3. For **Project-Based Learning**: **47 %** felt prepared to use PBL in their classrooms, and an additional **47%** will use PBL “with support”; for **Cooperative Learning**, **78%** felt prepared to use the technique in their classrooms, and an additional **20%** would use the technique with support; for **Technology**, **42%** felt prepared to integrate all tech tools in their classrooms, and additional **42%** would integrate some tools.
- Comments from surveys, the Discussion Board, and + Δ charts indicated a positive reaction to **technology breakout sessions**. Teachers were impressed with technology capabilities and the promised availability of products for their use.
- At least half of the participants felt the **Standards-based Lessons** sessions were ineffective and should be presented with more clarity and guidance for learning. From the Needs Assessment survey, however, only 18% (7 teachers) indicated a need for further training in this area.
- Many participants noted the fragmentation or **lack of continuity**/central purpose of the last two weeks. EAR seemed to be the concept tying all 3 weeks together, and this was both derived by participants and was often reinforced by presenters in weeks 2 and 3. However, there seemed to be a need for a **lead presenter** in these 2 weeks, someone who could tie all the presentations together, from both local and external presenters.
- Similar to the comments from Week 1, some participants (about 1/3 who commented) noted several long **periods of sitting or inactivity** while concepts were presented. For the entire institute, there was awareness of the delicate balance among (1) presenting concepts (2) engaging participants in hands-on activities, and (3) providing time for reflection/feedback. Overall, it is the evaluator’s conclusion that most presenters did a good job of balancing these three events, noting the group diversity and challenge of coordinating among multiple presenters/facilitators. Possibly, the suggestion from several participants of having **assigned table facilitators** would assist in managing these instructional events and participants needs.

For the Institute overall, participants were asked which session was **most meaningful**. Comments were tallied for 45 responses (duplicates within some responses):

Kagan/ Cooperative Learning	Technology	Lesson/ Project/ Refinement Protocol	IRRE/ EAR	Project Based Learning	Engagement	Standards Based Lessons	Assessment
15	10	8	6	6	5	1	1

As a summary observation, participants also mentioned **collaboration and getting to know their colleagues** (from their own and other school) better as both a valuable outcome as well as enhancement to the learning process. Teachers valued learning from each other and recognizing the special skills and talents of their colleagues county-wide. One teacher’s comment is illustrative: “I made some new friends and deepened my respect for the excellent teaching going on in the district. I was very, very impressed with my colleagues.”

Relevance of the institute to the needs of teachers and schools: Clearly the Institute agenda and objectives are a good match to where Sarasota County High Schools find themselves at this time in pursuing a reform/improvement agenda. The **intense focus on instruction** directly supports the Superintendent’s NeXt Generation Strategic Vision, including an immediate focus on high schools. Evaluation results from 3 years of implementation of Smaller Learning Communities (SLCs) in 5 high schools point to the need for increased engagement, alignment and rigor for all students in grades 9 – 12. After three years of implementation of SLCs, many structural changes have been made, including additional mechanisms for guidance and support; however, *few if any impacts on student achievement have been demonstrated.*

A second **focus on technology** parallels the district’s [NeXt Generation Technology](#) strategy, outlined in a companion document. From participants’ comments, their overall level of engagement in the institute, and their investments in products developed, most NGTs see **direct applicability of and a need for the skills** and practices advanced in the Institute. One survey comment may sum up both the tentativeness and positive potential in participants’ reactions: “I finally “got it” and understood that although the protocol has its flaws, it generates conversations that can only improve our teaching and learning.”

A critically important observation shared by many teachers was that the Institute engaged participants in the process of **examining both the process and purpose of teaching**. A majority of teachers, at least during the 3-week institute, were internalizing new techniques and methods and considering ways to incorporate these strategies in their existing repertoire of teaching practices. More will be discussed on this topic in the next section.

Preparation, expectations, tools & materials, and level of support: Evaluation questions related to these areas will be discussed together due to interrelationships among these variables. Participants responded to questions on the Week 1, Final Evaluation and Needs Assessment surveys, asking if they were prepared to implement the strategies taught. Survey results indicated the following:

- For Week 1, 43% strongly agreed and 52% agreed (**95%** total) that they felt prepared to apply what they learned in their own classrooms (**EAR, lesson planning**).
- For weeks 2 & 3, participants were asked how prepared they were to implement the strategies presented. For **Project-Based Learning**: 47 % felt prepared to use PBL in their classrooms, and an additional 47% (**94%** total) will use PBL “with support”; for **Cooperative Learning**, **78%** felt prepared to use the technique in their classrooms, and an additional 20% (**98%** total) would use the technique with support; for **Technology**, 42% felt prepared to integrate all tech tools in their classrooms, and additional 42% (**84%** total) would integrate some tools. The *Needs Assessment* survey supported these results: Only 18% of teachers indicated a need for further professional development in project-based learning, and 15% wanted more work in cooperative learning. However, over **33%** of teachers indicated a *need for further training* in the following areas of **technology** (ACTIVboard – **83%**, technology integration – **55%**, Instanet – **45%**, Inspiration – **40%**, and SmartWeb – **35%**).
- From the Needs Assessment survey, the following areas (not already mentioned) received 33% or more responses as needing further training: strategies for promoting **rigor (33%)**, **curriculum mapping (38%)**, and **authentic assessment (35%)**.
- On-site interviews with NGTs support the conclusion that teachers are not only prepared to implement many of the skills and strategies of the institute, but that each teacher has **begun to incorporate individual strategies** (such as project-based learning, engagement activities, cooperative learning), and that each teacher (and in some cases, the NGT teams) have **specific plans for incorporation** of strategies in the future and longer-term cooperative lessons/projects. One teacher had immediately rearranged his classroom seating to accommodate cooperative grouping and had observed a positive impact on students in just the first weeks of school.

Conclusion: Data from surveys, observations, discussion/debriefings and products describe an institute of generally high quality with respect to presenters, instructional activities/environment, and support during the training sessions. The institute topics, for the most part, proved to be relevant, even critically needed in the view of many participants. A majority of teachers left the institute feeling prepared to implement a large part of the material presented (with support). Transfer of skills and strategies into classroom practice was enhanced through several opportunities during the institute to

develop lesson plans, develop/present the final project, and a solidifying of content through collaborative feedback and the use of rubrics and quality protocols. These comments taken together seem to create a **moderately high level of readiness** on the part of NGTs to implement these strategies and to fulfill their roles in advancing the goals of NeXt Generation Learning during the 2005-2006 school year.

What are the expectations of Next Generation Teachers for the 2005-2006 school year (and beyond)? A lack of clarity on expectations was evident during the first 1-2 days of the institute. This ambiguity caused some anxiety for both participants and presenters, and some clarification was welcomed by all. The lack of clarity was also evident in discussions with principals prior to the Institute, and to some extent remains at this time (4 weeks into the school year). The Associate Superintendent provided much needed clarification during weeks 1 and 2. The critical question was: *Are NGTs expected to train/coach/observe/give feedback to other teachers on campus, and IF YES, when, how, and to whom?* The basic answer to this question was NO. NGTs were expected to apply the skills, strategies and technology of the Institute **in their own classrooms**, and to collaborate with their NGT team to deepen and enrich that process. A competency/implementation plan for all teachers in the district may provide a context for the expectations of NGTs, and appears in [Appendix 2](#). **The role of the school principal** in this process is beginning to take form, but has not been firmly established as of this report date (August 31, 2005).

Based on interviews with selected NGTs and principals during at the beginning of the school year, teachers seem to be comfortable with their roles and expectations for the school year. In all schools, the teams of (from 4 – 9) NGTs are **meeting regularly to continue their learning process**. In some cases they are simply discussing and sharing, in others, they are cooperatively designing or refining their projects/lessons from the institute, making plans for classroom application and observing/giving feedback for improvements. These collaborative processes are not yet solidified into a plan or agenda for the year. However, most teachers report that each school has been given the charge to work with their administration to develop an **implementation plan for each campus**.

NGTs are very non-committal on any process for sharing/collaboration/coaching of other teachers at this time, including any possibility of setting up a **demonstration/model classroom** for other teachers to visit – beyond their own NG Teacher team. However, at least 12 teachers listed “developing and managing a model classroom” as a further training need, along with 7 teachers who indicated “peer coaching and feedback.” It is the evaluator’s understanding that the **EAR Protocol** is available as a tool for NGTs to utilize *with each other*, to assist in learning/applying/strengthening engagement, alignment and rigor in their own classrooms; principals and assistant principals, however, are being trained (for calibration purposes only, at this time) to use the EAR Protocols as a tool for classroom observation with all teachers on campus. It is unclear whether EAR Protocol use will be used as an evaluative tool in the future (Teacher Performance Appraisal System).

Tools, materials, technology and level of support: NGTs were trained in multiple **techniques and strategies** during the Institute, and were given opportunities to practice skills, develop products, and receive feedback for refinement. **Materials** in the form of a 3-ring binder containing resources, guidelines and formats, a project-based learning handbook, and electronic files were distributed (e.g., lesson planning template). In addition, teachers received orientations to several **technology products**, hardware and software, all of which were to be available to teachers soon after the beginning of school – including a classroom set of laptops (20), with wireless network/Internet capability to be shared between pairs of NGTs.

Conclusion: The Summer Institute was designed to get NGTs ready for their new roles and the task of redesigning instruction in their own classrooms. In that respect, the Institute was successful. A moderately high level of readiness or excitement was created (which is about as high as one can expect for high school teachers – according to the research). Based on a limited number of interviews and a few intercepted communications, **the fragility of this readiness is beginning to be tested** for NGTs at this time. This is not necessarily an indication of a major problem, and may be expected as the challenges of a new school year and the inertia of past practice tend to overwhelm the NGTs available time and energy.

Clearly, **the level of support for these teachers will need to be extraordinary** in the early weeks/months of implementation, including the delivery of promised tools/technology, and technology support. One reason behind this conclusion is the extraordinary level of support that was provided during the Institute. Teachers had teams of expert presenters, networked communications, a continuous feedback/correction process, accessible and cordial collaborators, and a limited number of tasks to do well. Now they are back in school, working in one of the most traditional and immovable institutions in the U.S., and they are expected *to innovate*. The NGTs need **consistent and frequent support** – from the district curriculum/professional development/accountability team, from the district technology team, and from their local school administrators. Many proven change models also indicate that they will need two additional components: (1) continued **pressure and clarification of expectations** and goals for the year, and (2) **periodic feedback** on how they are doing. Suggestions for support are found under Recommendations.

Recommendations

1. The district instructional technology office should make every effort to **deliver and set up technology equipment and systems** according to the original schedule. As importantly, the district (possibly in cooperation with school-based technology specialists) should insure that NGTs have needed support for **set-up and testing of each system** to confirm smooth operation. If additional training is required, as was indicated by some respondents in the Needs Assessment survey, a schedule for that training should be established immediately. **Rationale:** Throughout the Institute, technology was mentioned by NGTs as one of the most valuable and attractive components of the NeXt Generation “package.” Rolling

- out **technology should be a priority** for the district because this component may provide significant momentum, if only symbolically, for NGTs to continuing to adopt additional innovative practices.
2. An overall **strategic plan** for NeXt Generation Teachers should be developed and communicated to all involved staff. Such a plan may have existed in rough form prior to the Institute, but much clarification and learning has occurred since that time and has been communicated piecemeal during the training, in meetings, and in the form of memoranda/messages. This plan should include goals, timelines, technology & materials/tools, and especially some direction on **roles and responsibilities** for three critical areas in implementation: (1) goals/products, (2) feedback/data mechanisms, and (3) support. Especially important is a delineation of roles between district staff, principals and external consultants (IRRE). For example, a plan would contain some of the following details:
 - a. **Goals/products:** What are some typical products or accomplishments expected of NGTs this first year (the [competency list](#) provides guidance here, but describes processes, not outcomes or accomplishments). Clearly, each NGT and each school will have somewhat different goals, but a finite menu could be developed for planning purposes.
 - b. **Feedback mechanisms:** How will NGTs know if they are being successful or if their products/activities are of high quality? (1) Several rubrics may be available already to assist in this, but these need to be referenced or others developed where none exist. (2) The second area of concern is: Who will provide the feedback, for development purposes (other NGTs, outside consultants, district staff, and principals)? How will NGTs document their accomplishments/progress (e.g., portfolio, journal, etc.) Appropriate use of the EAR protocol should be specified in this section.
 - c. **Support:** How/when will NGTs receive additional training? How will support for technology be provided? Who will recognize NGTs for their accomplishments? How can learning be shared within the school and across schools?
 3. As a complement to the strategic plan discussed in #2, an **overall management/ coordinating mechanism** needs to be specified. For example, one person should be designated as the **manager of the NGT project**, and a coordinating team should be identified which *includes school principals*. Currently, NGTs are proceeding based on directions received during the Institute, along with guidance from several of the following sources: (1) Each school appears to have a district liaison from the Institute training team, (2) most NGT teams are meeting weekly, developing their own agendas, (3) district technology staff are providing information and delivering technology, (4) principals and assistant principals are communicating infrequently with NGTs, (5) each school is “supposed to” develop

- an implementation plan for the school, but the format/timeline/responsibility for this is not clear, and (6) some NGTs are assisting in the upcoming teacher training with IRRE, but their roles with other teachers remain ambiguous. **Principals** seem unclear on their roles with respect to NGTs, or at least, are not taking the lead in developing a plan or providing guidance for their implementation.
4. In addition to technology, and the reasons listed under #1 above, the **collaborative project-based learning unit** and/or **lesson planning** unit, including feedback mechanisms and protocols/rubrics for refinement appeared to be particularly meaningful for NGTs as offering potential for deepening implementation of NeXt Generation Learning. The project and lesson development/refinement exercises receive high ratings during the Institute, and were mentioned during follow-up interviews as an area where NGTs had plans for continued development, collaboration and implementation. This process also serves as the vehicle for incorporating EAR, cooperative learning, technology, and other practices from the institute. This component should be a **primary focus of the implementation support** provided to NGTs, where district staff, principals, and ITTE/consultants can provide goal/plans clarification, feedback, and support/recognition.
 5. Two other areas from the institute emerge from the data as needing support and reinforcement:
 - a. The first is **cooperative learning**, which has emerged as the most likely and most straightforward innovation to implement (or to refine) for many NGTs. This practice has a very high potential for successful implementation. Many teachers, of course already use this method, but the institute has caused those teachers to reflect on that use, especially as integrated with other practices and EAR.
 - b. **Engagement, alignment and rigor (EAR)** should also be an area of focus, not only because of its potential impact on instruction, but because this component was presented as pervasive strategy and benchmark for all of the other components. In contrast to *technology, project-based learning, and cooperative learning*, EAR needs attention not because of its high potential for successful implementation, but because of the complexity of the classroom observation/data synthesis/calibration process. The purported dual role of the EAR protocol as an *evaluative tool* and a *developmental tool* also presents a challenge for how this component is presented. NGTs generally reacted positively to EAR during the institute. They internalized the definitions, learned how to incorporate each dimension into lessons, and learned how to identify the presence or absence of each. However, NGTs also expressed some frustration with the technical and measurement aspects of this technology, are suspicious of the research behind it (i.e., want to see the data), and are

somewhat anxious about whether its use will be developmental or evaluative (whether they are the evaluator or evaluatee).

Support for this component should include frequent opportunities for **dialogue and feedback** from NGTs and principals, along with monitoring of effective and appropriate use.

6. Several suggestions relating to the institute schedule and design emerged consistently from participants' comments. These suggestions should be considered for future institutes. They include:
 - a. breaking the three weeks into **week-long sessions**, or, possibly, two 1.5 week sessions.
 - b. building at least a **one week break** between an institute session and the beginning of the school year.
 - c. assigning a **lead facilitator/trainer** from within the district presentation team to provide continuity, transitions, summarizing, etc. across individual presentations, including those from individual external consultants.
 - d. consider assigning **table facilitators** for each group within the institute to fulfill the role of clarifying directions, gathering individual questions/comments, facilitating two-way feedback between participants and presenters, and to assist with materials/resources/logistics. *Caution: Participants took considerable responsibility for their own learning and self-management during the institute, and the presence of a table/group facilitator could work against that process.*
7. As a design consideration for future institutes and for continued training and support, opportunities should be taken to link NGT components to the **Smaller Learning Community (SLC)** and **career/workplace preparation** initiatives in high school. This strategic link and context was not observed during the first week of the institute, and may have been mostly absent throughout (the evaluator did not observe the last 1.5 weeks). By not linking these initiatives, one or more problems may arise (1) teachers perceive NGT as “just another program – soon to be replaced as well, when the leadership changes”, or (2) teachers' and administrators' investments in and the changes made under the SLC initiative over the last 4 years are not valued or connected. The SLCs and professional learning communities provide a natural context for practicing and deepening the NGT strategies. Persons in leadership and training positions, including outside consultants (e.g. IRRE) and principals, should intentionally link the NGT and SLC initiatives any time this linkage is mutually supportive. NGTs are making these connections themselves, but they will need overt examples from leadership if the two initiatives are to develop a synergy of common purpose.

Appendix 1: Competency List and Long-Range Plan For Next Generation Teachers

Competency	Year 1 (05-06)	Year 2 (06-07)	Year 3 (07-08)	Year 4 (08-09)	Year 5 (09-10)
(4) Uses curriculum resources (i.e., defined district curriculum objectives, FCAT benchmarks, Florida Course Descriptions) to identify essential objectives and plan for instruction.	X (A)				
(1) Analyzes performance data to measure progress, diagnose strengths and weaknesses, and determine trends. (big picture data)	X (A)				
(3) Sets high expectations for students and provides rigor and relevance in instructional activities.		X			
(12) Engages students in the analysis and evaluation of their learning and adjusts instruction based on student feedback.		X			
(8) Clearly communicates relationship between the lesson content and procedures and the intended student learning outcomes.		X (A)			
(2) Selects targeted learning objectives using knowledge of grade level expectations, the effective sequence for skill development, student skill levels, time available for instruction, and teaching resources available.			X (A)		
(5) Uses multiple methods of ongoing formative and summative assessments to measure student mastery of essential knowledge and skills.				X (A)	
(6) Designs assessments to measure student mastery of essential knowledge and skills).				X	
(7) Integrates assessment data from multiple sources to plan, evaluate				X	
(14) Provides re-teaching, remediation, or enrichment opportunities to ensure mastery and motivation for students to achieve their learning outcomes.				X	
(15) Plans formal reviews to reinforce essential skills and knowledge over time.				X	
(9) Selects the most effective research-based teaching techniques, materials, and equipment (incl. technology).					X
(10) Uses instructional grouping options as appropriate for planned instructional purposes.					X
(11) Engages students in explaining and/or demonstrating the relevance of topics and activities.					X
(13) Designs grading and evaluation criteria that support the students' understanding of their performance in relationship to the learning goal(s).					X

APPENDIX 2: Formative evaluation communications

To: NeXt Generation Training Design Team

From: George Reid, External Evaluator performgrp@comcast.net

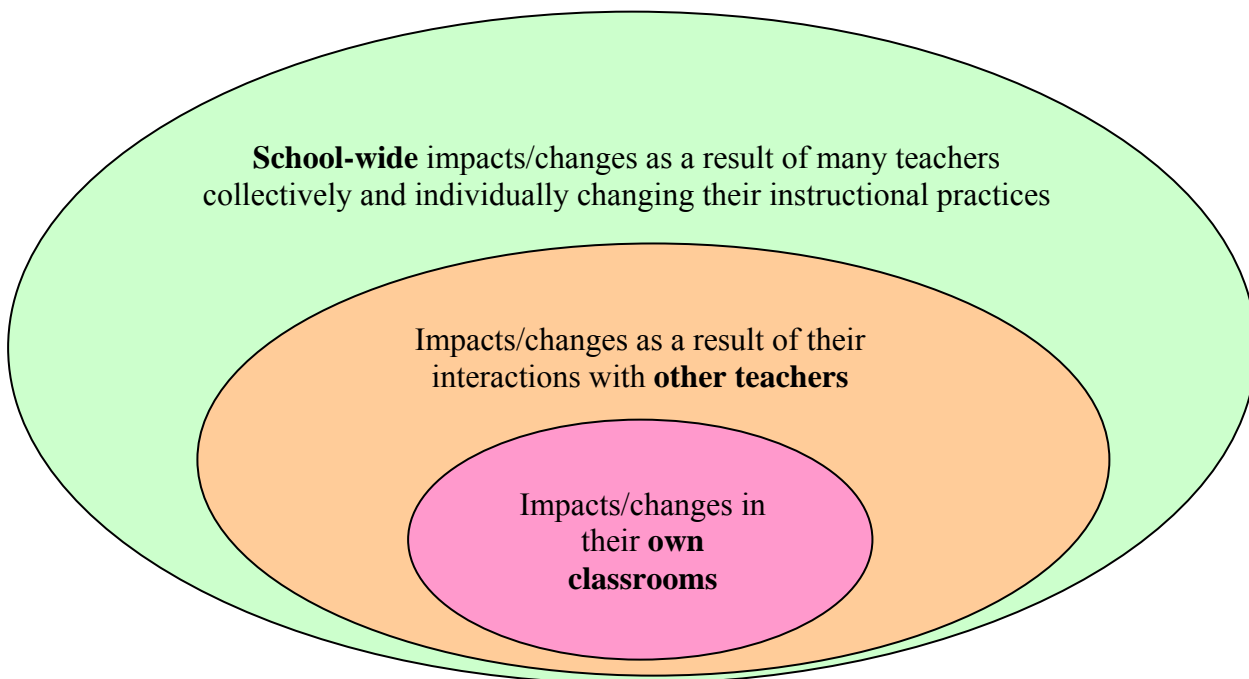
Date: July 12, 2005

Subj: Some thoughts/observations after Monday's training/introduction

I was thinking on three levels as the training and overall project began to sink in. I think these levels represent the structure for the **needs assessment** being developed for the teachers. There will be needs at all three levels, and Level II needs to be fleshed out before Level I can be specified in any detail – otherwise, you have a skills-driven training program and not a goal-driven (strategic) training program.

Level I: What are the **technical/content skills and knowledge** that the participants are expected to learn and apply in their classrooms?

Level II: What are the **strategic goals** derived from the overall NeXt Generation plan that provides the umbrella and rationale for the competencies being learned by NeXt Generation Teachers? In other words, what will these teachers accomplish, set into motion, produce, change, impact --- *as a result of* applying these new competencies? The strategic goals appear as expanding circles...



Level III: What are the **political and interpersonal issues** that arise as Levels I and II begin to take shape and interact with the current system? For example:

- What is my **role** as a NeXt Generation teacher? How will I be perceived by my colleagues? How do I want to be perceived? What conversations need to occur (1) between me and my colleagues back at school, (2) between me and my principal/assistant principal, and (3) between me and my fellow NeXt Generation team members, prior to any content-based interactions resulting from my role?
- How does my role (in instructional reform/improvement) differ from the **role of my principal**? How will I and my principal use the NeXt Generation technology differently, as we interact with other faculty on campus?
- How will I learn the additional (**interpersonal/coaching**) **skills** I need as I begin to interact with other teachers? Who will communicate the “**ground rules**” under which I will operate as a (1) demonstration classroom and (2) peer coach?

Other, random observations (Monday):

I observed many effective **adult learning principles** being applied by the training team (IRRE):

- Modeling the skills being presented (E—A—R)
- Reviewing previous content and expectations; doing a “post-mortem” on the activities from earlier in the spring; illuminating and inviting discussion of concerns; engaging participants as collaborative problem solvers with the trainers
- Generally treating participants as partners and collaborators/adults, whose opinions and expertise is respected and valued
- “Your concerns become an action plan for IRRE”

I observed some good “positioning” and culture-building related to the roles, competencies and technology being presented. There was reinforcement of the following the principle/guideline that NeXt Generation teachers are not evaluators – are more like visitors – in their future roles.

However, I also perceived some confused or mixed messages being presented, which reinforce my earlier comments about Levels I, II, III. I am not sure how these messages were perceived by the participants, but AT SOME POINT, a lack of clarification will cause problems.

- The session on Monday jumped right into the technical aspects of being a NeXt Generation teacher **without a clear context purpose being developed** for the use of these (powerful) skills and technology. What is their role? What will their role be

when they get back at school? What are they to accomplish or put in to place this first year? How will their roles evolve over Years 2, 3, etc.?

- An **evaluative context** was implied, even if negated in words a few times. Phrases like “a conversation that needs to happen with that teacher” and “if the indicator is not observed, there will be an intervention” leave the participants to wonder what their role is in such a system. Data gatherer? Coach? Consultant? Critical friend? Technician on call for the principal (to carry information forward as a supervisor/evaluator? Maybe these phrases were left over from the principal’s training session, but if they are part of the system – how does the NeXt Gen. teachers fit into the system?
- There seems to be a **“PLAN.”** I would suggest that the plan should be shared with these teachers so they can position themselves in the system of school improvement. They are not just “learners” – they are players in the change process.
- **I think this is the plan:**

YEAR 1: Apply all this good stuff in your own classroom; use your team to assist you through observations, data analysis, and coaching/feedback. When you feel comfortable with certain skill sets, work with your principal and other team members to offer your classroom as a demonstration site for these “modules” – maybe just within your academy or learning community.

YEAR 2: Expand your own application and learning, while extending yourself to other faculty as a demonstration classroom as well as observer and coach. Work with your principal and your team to market your services and keep yourself grounded and comfortable with your role; work with your principal and team to begin measuring the impacts of your role on other faculty and the school.

- And what about the Principals? What is their PLAN?

NOTE: This is “thinking out loud” - and does not represent any kind of evaluation at this point!

George

To: NeXt Generation Training Design Team

From: George Reid, External Evaluator performgrp@comcast.net

Date: July 14, 2005

Subj: Some thoughts/observations after Wednesday's training

A few more thoughts on what can be *reinforced* in the workshop ...

- We need to help participants look at the NeXt generation model and experience as a way of working (together), not just as a teaching and learning intervention. The processes they are engaging in and products they are producing represent a **new way of working** for teachers (like a Professional Learning Community). For example, designing high engagement, rigorous instructional lessons and then refining these lessons through peer review and classroom tryouts is a new way of working. Of course the object is to improve teaching and learning, but they are not just learning how to be better teachers – they are becoming instructional system designers.
- I've not seen all of the training, but I think there are some missed opportunities for connecting and **reinforcing Smaller Learning Communities**, especially career academies. Examples:
 - Collaboration teams, if from the same learning community, can focus on **improving instruction in the academy** – as a structural unit in between the classroom and the entire school. These learning communities should be functioning and professional learning communities, and the NeXt Generation teachers can serve as the core of these PLCs.
 - **Real-world contexts** have the potential of extending the meaning and exercise of alignment, engagement and rigor. The reference here is not grade levels or alignment with high stakes testing, but relates to the workplace and workplace competencies. What is rigorous in the academic setting may be subject to a different standard in the workplace, and we have an obligation to give students practice in these settings. This requires involvement of community/business partners, and immersion in real-world settings, which is a goal of career academies.
- I think the continuing exercise of **developing and improving the lesson plans**, by infusing higher levels of engagement, alignment and rigor is working well – and should continue to be reinforced as modeling this new way of working. The exercise models the whole concept of *mastery*, which can be used with students, along with continuous improvement and collaborative/peer critique.