

BYRAM HILLS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
ARMONK, NEW YORK

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**Title:** *How Can Assessments Inform My Daily Teaching?*  
**Year:** 2011-2012  
**School/Grade:** Coman Hill/ Grade 1 and 2 Math Specialist

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SUMMARY OF INVESTIGATORS OF PRACTICE ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT

**Context:**

I am a math specialist primarily working with first and second grade math students who need additional math support. Adhering to the Response to Intervention (RTI) framework, I teach targeted research-based interventions in small group settings to match the needs of our young learners.

**Action Plan:**

“Failing to prepare is preparing to fail.” (Wooden, John. *Wooden: A Lifetime of Observations and Reflections On and Off the Court*. New York, 1997.)

In order to ensure that time spent with my students is efficient, effective, and informative, I need to be well prepared for each lesson. Since knowing my students’ strengths and weaknesses plays a major role in lesson preparation, I decided to spend the year researching: *How Can Assessments Inform My Daily Teaching?*

There was a time when I thought assessments meant tests. Today I am well aware that assessments include informal observations, interviews, progress monitoring results charted on graphs, topic assessments, and cumulative assessments. However, it is not enough to simply conduct an assessment. It is equally as important to analyze the results to better inform our teaching.

The following references guided my research study:

Explanation of Common Core:

<http://engageny.org/>. EngageNY, 2011. Web. May 31, 2012.

Explanation of PALS math program research:

<http://www.promisingpractices.net/program.asp?programid=143>.

Promising Practices Network, 2012. Web. May 31, 2012.

Explanation of the intervention framework:

Allsopp, David. et al. Mathematics RTI: A Problem-Solving Approach to Creating an Effective Model, Florida: LRP, 2010

## Results:

I recently told a first grade student that she taught me something new and she replied, “But **you’re** the teacher! How can **I** teach **you?**” Every moment I am learning from my students, colleagues and field experts.

I used to want to teach my struggling students **everything** in the math curriculum – time, money, computation, place value, geometry, measurement, etc. Through research, district sponsored meetings with Math Consultant, Sandy Atkins, daily discussions with math colleague, Ronni Levine, and weekly discussions with the Coman Hill Instructional Support Team (IST), I learned to trust the Response to Intervention (RTI) process. This meant...letting go. “Without such focus, attention to the practices would be difficult and unrealistic. The supporting work of the grade should indeed support the major focus, not detract from it.” (engageny.org). Reluctantly I realized that in order to teach depth over breadth, I should focus on just two of the major common core clusters: Operations and Algebraic Thinking and Number and Operations in Base Ten. This focus guided such questions as: What needs to be reviewed? What needs to be taught explicitly? What needs to be introduced to help the student feel more confident in class?

Based on student interviews, classroom performance, and topic assessments, I realized that two first grade students (from different classes) were struggling with similar place value concepts. Since “understand place value” is an area of intensive focus of the common core, I presented my findings to the IST where it was suggested that I implement a research-based program 3 days/week for 6 weeks. At the end of the 6-week cycle I reported my findings back to the IST. Data included observations, progress monitoring graphs, and pre- and post- assessments. This data-based dialogue helped us make informed decisions for ongoing support.

Every minute with my students needs to be carefully planned. And that usually includes the one minute it takes to walk a student from his/her classroom to the Math Lab. We might use that time to review days of the week, coin values, counting skills, and/or age differences between siblings. Knowing my students through their assessments helps make our time together efficient and effective.

## Implications:

I feel that I am getting closer to perfecting my craft (ah, the thought!). The Byram Hills School District has supported my growth as a math teacher through consultants, curriculum study with colleagues, and Investigators of Practice. It is important to combine what I know about the curriculum with what I know about my students to plan the best lessons. It is very clear to me now that assessments are not just for reporting how a student fares on a unit of study, but how a teacher can use the information to figure out the “Now what” part of teaching.

Maybe next year’s question will be, “How can data help me set *crystal* clear goal