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Action Research Task Force:

# Evidence & Impact

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FROM A DISTRICT LEADER

Most consultants want them[selves] to look good- your group wanted our teachers to learn and grow with work they were interested in.



# About Action Research Task Forces

**Action Research Task Forces are our answer to the complex challenges that cannot be explored through just one line of inquiry. Through a five-part collaborative meeting series, individual participants complete research of their own, guided by a CLS Associate.**

Whether in their own individual classrooms or as a collective within a collaborative team, teachers continually identify learning challenges and select practices to address the needs of their students. Unfortunately, the shortfall is in memorializing the steps taken and the results of effectiveness. A simple way to formalize this process so that it can be repeated is through action research. Action research allows educators to simultaneously investigate and solve a learning challenge, so the inquiry and action take place at the same time. Through a simple three-step model of Challenge-Practice-Results, it is possible to capture the results achieved by students and to relate the teacher practices that caused those results. Having both the results and the actions leading to those results can make the connection between teaching practices and student learning, thereby measuring impact. By sharing those results through an adult science fair (tri-fold boards and gallery-walk presentations) the evidence needed to replicate success is captured and celebrated. Action research is an effective and efficient way to maximize improvement initiatives and change learning for students. Because it is adaptable to any context, this three-step process can be used at all levels of learning – classroom, school, and district. By utilizing a collaborative meeting series, individual participants and teams complete research of their own, guided by a CLS Associate. And, teachers, schools and districts have evidence of local impact.

# What Our Clients Are Saying



"I wanted to thank you again for supporting and attending our Action Research Task Force. The data shows transformative work among the teachers that will likely continue to make an impact on their practice. We are seeing the benefits of this job-embedded, action-research professional learning approach. Much of our teachers' engagement and enthusiasm for the work stems from the fact that the data they collect, analyze, and reflect is from their own students."

"I just wanted to thank you again for all your support and work with our team. I know we aren't the easiest to win over but after today I KNOW you made a difference on our campus. In brief reflection with some of our folks, today we finally saw the pedagogy shift we've been working so hard on. [Our school] can be a tough nut to crack because our folks are so committed to our students and the work we do to support them. We don't always take kindly to strangers but you embraced our culture and worked with us in spite of some of the initial impressions. Thank you for sticking with us and making the necessary changes to your plans to make our work so successful. You truly modeled the strategies, practices, and approaches we want our teachers to use with their students. You worked with me to understand our learners and adapt the learning for them to create maximum success. As I said to you in person, anytime you want to come back and work with [our school] to test new theories, etc, you are always welcome!"

# Case Study

This case study presents evidence from Sanger Unified School District, a mid-size school district serving more than 10,000 students.

Although Sanger Unified School District is only in its first year of an Action Research Task Force, they had participation from more than 300 teachers and filled their high school gymnasium with display boards. Their evidence addressed not only academic achievement, but also tracked student motivation and engagement. Read more below about a few of the specific findings that educators discovered through their work in the Action Research Task Force.

Additionally, you can watch videos reflecting on the experience from [the perspective of teachers and students](#) and from [the perspective of a CLS Associate](#).

## Every Classroom, Every Subject

In the music classrooms, the objective quality of music making had improved from “middle-school repertoire to high school repertoire” and that students had an incentive to practice and achieve musical success.

Cross disciplinary writing, with common writing rubrics in English, social studies, science, and math associated with deeper student understanding of core subjects, improved writing, and better academic achievement.

## Failure Reduction

Pervasive reduction in the D/F rate, accompanied by external evidence of improved achievement.

High school 9th grade math used to have the highest failure rate at more than 50%. Those courses in particular have a lower failure and in two high schools the failure rate is zero. Both high schools administered external math test that also showed significant gains, indicating that this was not grade inflation, but genuine improvements in academic achievement.

## Student Persistence

Consistent use of resubmission of missing work, a leading cause of student failure, and targeted assessment retakes, asking the students only to retake the items that they missed and not the entire test.

Improved student motivation and engagement as measured by persistence in difficult problems and persistence in external multi-step math problems.

## Teacher Support

Practice in class rather than at home, associated with a dramatic increase in student performance and teacher satisfaction.

Consistent use of teacher-created scoring rubrics, replacing the ponderous and ambiguous rubrics helpfully provided by publishers and state officials.

## Task Force Facilitation

CLS will collaborate with teachers and leaders to support the facilitation of the Action Research Task Force and support the analysis of their existing challenges, structures, and practices. Participants will leave with a plan to make significant improvements that will bear fruit in the form of better engagement and student results. In addition to facilitating the action research task force meetings, each day CLS is in the district CLS will meet with the cabinet, district and school leaders, department leaders, and teacher-leaders, as directed by the district. CLS will provide feedback to district leadership on school and district meetings and classroom observations.

### **Action Research Task Force Meeting Sample Agenda**

- 7:30-9:00 Building Staff Meeting
- 9:15-10:30 Building Administrators Meeting
- 10:45-12:00 Department Meetings
- 12:15-1:30 Working Lunch with Administrators
- 1:45-2:45 1:1 Teacher or Instructional Leadership Support Meetings
- 3:00-5:00 Action Research Task Force Meeting



## **Meeting 1: Fearless Learning**

In this meeting, we will explore the principles of a fearless environments and consider the elements of FAST feedback - Fair, Accurate, Specific, and Timely. Task Force members will identify the principles and values that guide their discussions for the future.

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## **Meeting 2: Action Research and Project Selection**

In this seminar, each participant will consider an action research project. They will begin to create action research projects that follow the format of Challenge, Practice, Results.

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## **Meeting 3: Action Research and Feedback**

In this seminar, each participant will receive feedback on the action research project. Participants will share what they've worked on since meeting 2 that follow the format of Challenge, Practice, Results.

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## **Meeting 4: Action Research and Preparations**

In this seminar, each participant will receive feedback on the action research project. Participants will share what they've worked on since meeting 3 that follow the format of Challenge, Practice, Results. In addition, participants will practice presentations and receive feedback that strengthens their understanding of the causes, effects, and lesson learned. Final preparations are made for the Science Fair.

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## **Meeting 5: Science Fair**

Teachers need to see the results of their work, not merely witness a workshop or seminar. Therefore, we recommend that the district or school create an "Exhibition" for professionals. The Exhibition consists of a three-panel board that addresses three questions: What was the Challenge? What did we do? What were our results? This typically takes place in the late spring or summer. The Exhibition is an example of an activity that publicly acknowledges the work of great teachers and administrators. Our support includes individual support for teacher action research projects and individual teams.

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**Site Visits:** In addition to the five task force meetings, CLS Associates will be on-site for an additional two days to further support participating teachers and leaders.

In addition to these formal meetings, Creative Leadership Solutions Associates will be available to support Task Force members with personal "hotline" support, 24/7 - that is, we are completely committed to providing around the clock support to you.



FROM A SCHOOL COUNSELOR

I am always reflecting on my practice as a school counselor and how I can support students. The [Action Research Task Force] provided me a time to reflect specifically about my collaboration with teachers, and how I can impact student learning and grades.

# Case Study

The evidence for this case study comes from a large California school district serving 30,000 students.

More than 280 educators and leaders presented the work they did in the Action Research Task Force. The evidence they presented shows growth academically and behaviorally. Some of their findings are detailed below.



## Fight Free

Fights dropped 85% and vandalism dropped to zero as a result of a systematic tardiness prevention program, with teachers at the door welcoming students to the classroom and an all-hands-on deck approach to clear hallways during passing periods. In both a junior high and elementary school, teachers used reward systems to recognize on-time attendance. While extrinsic rewards were initially used, intrinsic motivation and relationships are taking their place over time.

## Tackling Complexity

Math scores improved as a result of analysis of the cause of wrong answers – a process well beyond typical item analysis that identifies wrong answers. For example, two-step word problems baffled many students and teachers devised a strategy to break down each word problem, eliminate extraneous information, and highlight the most relevant terms. This procedure contributed to the rate of students failing to attempt problems dropping from 57% to 14%.

## Devaluing Missing Work

Significant decrease in the D/F rate as a result of evaluating students based on their assessment results rather than homework completion. They were surprised to find a number of students who passed every assessment but were receiving Fs on their report card as a result of missing work. That should clearly demonstrate that whatever the student was missing was not relevant to proficient performance.

## Increasing Literacy

Reading scores increased in primary grades by substantial margins as a result of systematic progress monitoring.

# Frequently Asked Questions

[Watch a video of Dr. Douglas Reeves talking about the benefits of the Action Research Task Force process](#)

## What can I expect from CLS Associates?

CLS Associates will collaborate with teachers and leaders in either a virtual, blended, or live format. Associates will support the facilitation of the Action Research Task Force and support the district in analyzing their existing grading and reporting structure, leaving with a plan to make significant improvements that will bear fruit in the form of better engagement and student results. In addition to facilitating the Action Research Task Force meetings, each day CLS is in the district, Associates will meet with the cabinet, district and school leaders, department leaders, and teacher-leaders, as directed by the district. Associates will provide feedback to district leadership on school and district meetings and classroom observations.

## How is the research implemented?

The Action Research Task Force is only the first half of the equation. The years following the work of the Action Research Task Force can be approached several different ways:

### **Option 1: Secondary Focused Groups (1 Associate)**

Establish groups by grading practice categories. These groups will be mixed across grade levels and school sites. The purpose is to extend and strengthen their grading practices over the school year. This would be composed of quarterly meetings.

### **Option 2: Secondary Monthly Visits (1-2 Associates)**

An Associate would alternate between classrooms and PLC groups to extend the learnings from the grading exhibition. The Associate would cover topics including PLC, quality assessment, and feedback. With a September-May visitation schedule, the Associate would be at each school site three times a year.

### **Option 3: Secondary Monthly Visits (3 Associates)**

An Associate would be assigned to classrooms and PLC groups to extend the learnings from the grading exhibition. These three associates would cover topics including PLC, quality assessment, and feedback. With a September-May visitation schedule, and with 3 Associates they would be at each school site nine times a year.

# Why Us?

Creative Leadership Solutions empowers students, teachers, and leaders with evidence, passion, and results. We help build the knowledge and skills of educators with the goal of improving student achievement. The schools we work with become more equitable and define excellence for themselves.

Our team includes world-class experts, best-selling authors, and internationally recognized authorities in leadership, teaching, assessment, and organizational culture.

We emphasize people over products. We don't believe in one size fits all solutions. Each school is unique, so we believe in unique, flexible, ongoing solutions driven by school leaders and teachers and supported by our team.

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