



The TAP System Training Portal in Practice

How can career teachers become more involved?

Since its launch in 2010, the TAP System Training Portal has been a trusted go-to source for a range of professional development needs in TAP schools. With a few clicks or touches of a screen, urban, suburban and rural schools can access any number of training services at their convenience and in the comfort of their own locations.

Currently the portal houses more than 190 hours of video footage of classroom observations, 19 training modules covering each indicator of effective practice from the TAP rubric with video clips and supporting materials, and over 200 strategies organized by grade and subject level with supporting documents. The tool's

popularity has soared as fast as it has expanded. Nearly 6,000 educators used the portal during its first school year in 2010-2011. Almost 20,000 are now subscribed.

While the portal is useful to TAP teachers at every level, the majority of those who use the portal are master and mentor teachers. As career teachers are full-time classroom teachers, devoting extra time to the portal can be a challenge in the hustle-bustle of a school day. How, then, could master and mentor teachers help career teachers benefit from the portal? Dee Dee Horen, a TAP master teacher at South Grove Intermediate School in Beech Grove, Indiana, makes the tool an integral part of instruction and coaching.

When it comes to training, said Horen, “I start with the TAP portal. It gives teachers a deeper understanding of the rubric to be able to show them a video clip of a particular aspect of practice in action.”

Based on the results and feedback from their classroom observations, teachers can go right to the training modules to better understand what effective practice looks like in specific areas. For example, if their evaluation identified Academic Feedback as an area for improvement, they can watch clips of other teachers effectively applying this skill, hear the conversation between that teacher and their coach relating to this skill, or read the notes backing up the scoring of this indicator in that lesson.

In TAP professional development “cluster” meetings, Horen and her faculty consult the portal for insights into the different rubric indicators. “The training modules break down the descriptors really well,” she said. They include detailed explanations of indicators and descriptors, supporting research and documents, video clips, quizzes to practice scoring and evaluating, coaching questions, application of the rubric indicators, and professional development connections.

The more intensive research has been particularly helpful in grasping the concepts of the Thinking and Problem Solving indicator—one of the rubric’s most critical. “If teachers ask questions or want to refine their understanding, I’ll encourage them to watch a video.”

South Grove Intermediate’s use of the TAP portal has grown since the school started implementation of the comprehensive reform in the 2011-12 school year. During the first cluster cycle, master and mentor teachers introduced the faculty to the portal and spent significant time learning TAP’s basics. When they became more familiar with the TAP system, they explored the online resource more fully. The video library quickly became a necessity for “inter-rater reliability”—the process for ensuring that all educator evaluators are on the same page when scoring observations.

“We couldn’t do it without the portal,” Horen said. “In our TLT [TAP Leadership Team] meeting, we’ll ask, ‘What does a ‘3’ in [The Learning Environment indicator] Managing Student Behavior look like to us?’ Then we’ll get into the portal, see one of the lessons, and determine whether we interpreted the rating the same as the national raters did.”

The observation scoring by national raters is one of the most valuable aspects of the portal. To accompany every lesson—shot in “split-screen” format to provide a 360-degree view of teachers and students—the raters compile scoring and evidence sheets. In this way, educators can gain a full scope of the lesson, examine the evidence and scores, and practice calibrating their own scoring to that of the national raters.

Horen looks forward to more lessons in the next phase of the portal. The TAP System Training Portal 2.0 will feature more content in the 2013–14 school year—including new lessons by content and grade level—as well as a focus on helping teachers move from proficient to exemplary on the rubric indicators. In addition, users will enjoy a portal experience tailored to their needs; suggested professional development activities will be offered to support individual growth plans, taking teacher evaluation data into account.

“The TAP System Training Portal has evolved into a ‘teacher effectiveness center’ for the entire school, providing everyone with relevant support tools specific to their roles within TAP,” said Dr. Gary Stark, president and CEO of NIET. “NIET will continue to learn from our educators and ensure that our tools align to their needs.”



Dee Dee Horen’s Tips for Getting Career Teachers Started

1

Devote staff development time to the portal at the beginning of the year.

2

Incorporate the portal in cluster meetings throughout the year.

3

Encourage career teachers to view training videos as a supplement to your feedback.

4

Be proactive and save time by performing initial research and asking career teachers to refine it.