

Staying Connected

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Volume 4 Issue 1

School benchmarking

Want to know how well your schools are doing, how much they could improve, and where they could go to find out how? PRISM can provide detailed school benchmarking information for nearly 4000 schools in New York State.

Virtual focus groups

PRISM recently completed a virtual needs assessment for the New York State Education Department.

Virtual workspace

Better than email and listserves, PRISM's Conference Center provides distributed work teams virtual space where they can work productively online.

Do participate in threaded discussions and file sharing. Do *not* suffer from email overload. Please call for information or go to www.prismdecision.com and click on Conference Center.

Decision support

PRISM offers clients the CoNexus[®] suite of decision tools for face-to-face meetings. Or use the Concept System[®], a powerful Web-enabled idea mapping and rating tool.

School services

PRISM Decision Systems helps you accelerate and improve planning with dynamic group processes and state-of-the-art decision systems. PRISM's services are BOCES aidable.

Getting results--fast

PRISM assists teams to efficiently

- Survey for needs assessment.
- Benchmark against best practice peers.
- Formulate a mission and vision.
- Set performance targets.
- Generate strategies.
- Identify priorities.
- Align resources.
- Plan for implementation.
- Make any decision.

School benchmarking

For 4000 schools in New York State, PRISM's benchmarking service

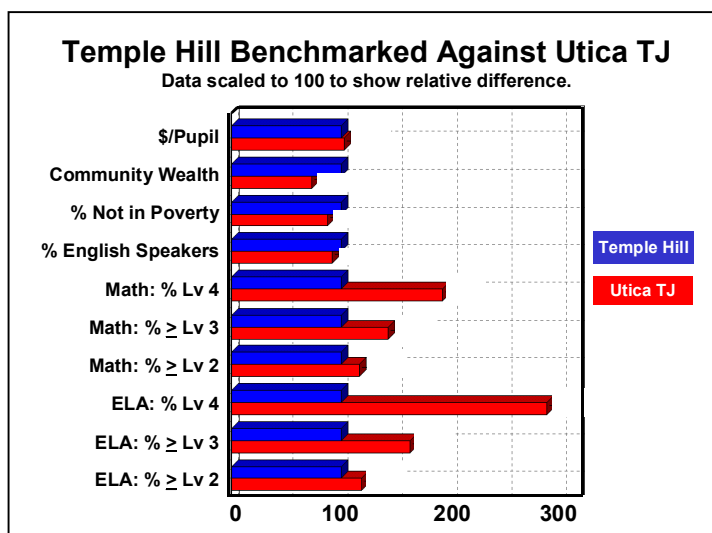
- Identifies best practice schools in all demographic profiles.
- Matches lower performing schools with their best practice peers.
- Sets peer-based improvement targets for all lower performing schools.

Frontier Analyst[®]

PRISM uses Frontier Analyst[®], a standard for benchmarking worldwide. Consider the example of Newburgh's Temple Hill School.

Frontier Analyst[®] benchmarked Temple Hill against a set of best practice peers, among them Utica's

Thomas Jefferson. Despite having lower community wealth, more students in poverty, and more English language learners, Utica TJ outperforms Temple Hill all six student performance measures.



School district planning

PRISM uses CoNexus[®], the Concept System[®] and Frontier Analyst[®] to develop powerful plans for

- Academic improvement (CDEP).
- Academic intervention services.
- Professional development.
- Special education.
- Alternative education.
- Annual professional performance review.
- Technology.

comparative results beg key questions: What might Utica TJ be doing differently than Temple Hill to achieve better results despite its greater constraints? What of these "best practices" might Temple Hill replicate in its quest to continuously improve student performance? For more information on PRISM's benchmarking service, please go to www.prismdecision.com and click on "School Benchmarking" or call 607-771-5411.

Virtual focus groups

PRISM recently completed a virtual focus group for the New York State Education Department (NYSED) using the Concept System[®], a powerful, Web-enabled idea mapping and rating tool.

NYSED needed a low-cost, paperless means to assess the professional development (PD) needs of a variety of stakeholders from across the State.

Hundreds of participants logged on to a website and brainstormed 452 professional development needs. PRISM and NYSED reps analyzed these needs, eliminated redundancy, and settled on a final set of 84 needs.

Some 250 educators, including dozens of school superintendents, returned to the Web to rate the importance of the 84 needs. In the meantime, 16 volunteers sorted the same 84 statements into clusters and named those clusters.

The Concept System[®]

Powerful algorithms within the Concept System[®] analyzed all participant sorting and rating data. The resulting concept map defines eight clusters of PD needs in order of priority. (See Cluster Rating Map).

The results were telling. There were no current PD offerings for the highest rated cluster. And the cluster with the most current offerings was rated lowest in importance.

To view the virtual brainstorm, go to www.conceptsystems.com/projects/needs/phase1.htm.

To view the virtual rating, go to www.conceptsystems.com/projects/needs/phase2.htm.

For the study results, go to www.prismdecision.com, click on Public Downloads and scroll down to "Needs Assessment Report".

Training opportunities

PRISM delivers training in efficient team planning and decision-making,

Optimal thinking tips

Do you ever feel that a brilliant, creative alternative is just within your grasp...only to feel frustration as you settle for the same old solutions? Looking for a sure-fire way to get out of your mental rut and, in the words of Jim Morrison, "break on through to the other side"?

Assumption Busting

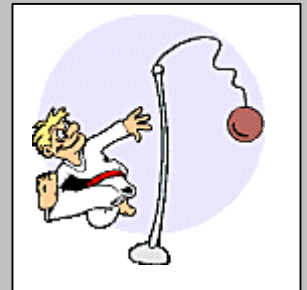
Assumptions can act as a powerful constraint on your thinking. Consider the game of tetherball. Just as the pole and rope determine the distance and route the tetherball can travel, an assumption defines the universe of options available to solve any problem. Creativity often requires assumption busting: identifying key assumptions, ruthlessly questioning their validity, generating new assumptions, and then asking "What if?" To complete the analogy, you need to dig up and move the pole; or even better: cut the rope and see where the ball sails.

World Class Assumption Busters

From Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*
The search for assumptions can be an effective way to weaken the grip of tradition upon the mind and to suggest the basis for a new one.

From Edward DeBono, *Lateral Thinking*

It is historical continuity that maintains most assumptions – not repeated assessment of their validity.



including creative problem solving, conflict resolution and consensus building. Other upcoming training opportunities include:

The 17th Annual Conference on The Positive Power of Humor and Creativity, April 12-14, 2002 in Saratoga Springs, New York. Go to www.humorproject.com.

The International Association of Facilitators Conference 2002, in Fort Worth, Texas, May 23 - 26, 2002. Go to www.iaf-world.org.

The 47th Annual Creative Problem Solving Institute, considered the

world's premier creativity conference, June 16-21, 2002, Adams Mark Hotel, Buffalo, NY. Go to www.ccf-cpsi.org.

Engagements

Arnot Medical Services
Binghamton City Schools
Binghamton Summer Music Festival
Borough of Fanwood, NJ
Chenango Memorial Hospital
City of Grand Rapids, MI
City School District of Albany
Education 21, Inc.
GHS Federal Credit Union
The Greater Boston Visitor and Convention Bureau
The Los Angeles Times
Lockport City Schools
Mercy Health System
National Institute for Health
New York State Education Department
New York State Electric & Gas
Oswego City Schools
Potsdam City Schools
Science Applications International Corporation
Telcordia Technologies
Three Village Central Schools
Times Mirror Company
United Health Services
United Medical Associates
Washington, DC Metro Transit Authority

