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Find **NW ALPS on the web:**
<http://www.nwesd.org/science/nwalps>

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ALPS

Assessing with Learning Progressions in Science

Project Update



In the fall of 2011, NWESD received Math/Science Partnership funding to partner with five school districts and Skagit Valley College in the *Assessing with Learning Progressions in Science* (ALPS) project.

The goals of the ALPS project are to:

1. Improve student learning in science.
2. Deepen teachers' understanding of the big ideas in science they are teaching in their classrooms.

The ALPS project brings together teams of elementary school teachers from Mount Vernon, Ferndale, LaConner, Lakewood, and Snohomish districts to:

1. Deepen their content knowledge during content immersions with higher-ed science faculty.
2. Create formative assessment plans (learning progressions) for the big ideas taught in their materials, implement their plans and assess their own instruction and their student's understandings.
3. Collaborate with colleagues in other districts around their learning.

The 22 teachers involved in the project meet face-to-face at Skagit Valley College in Mount Vernon where they participate in science content courses, receive instruction in formative assessment strategies and collaboratively draft learning progressions and formative assessments for their science instructional materials. Between face-to-face meetings, teachers collaborate in a Moodle learning community online, sharing new understandings and reflecting on the changes they have made in their instruction.

The theory of action for the NW ALPS project states that: Student achievement will improve when teachers know the content that is needed to teach their curriculum, create learning progressions based on that content knowledge and implement those learning progressions by applying formative assessments in their classrooms. We see great potential in this project and we are excited to share our progress and the developing outcomes we see from the work so far.

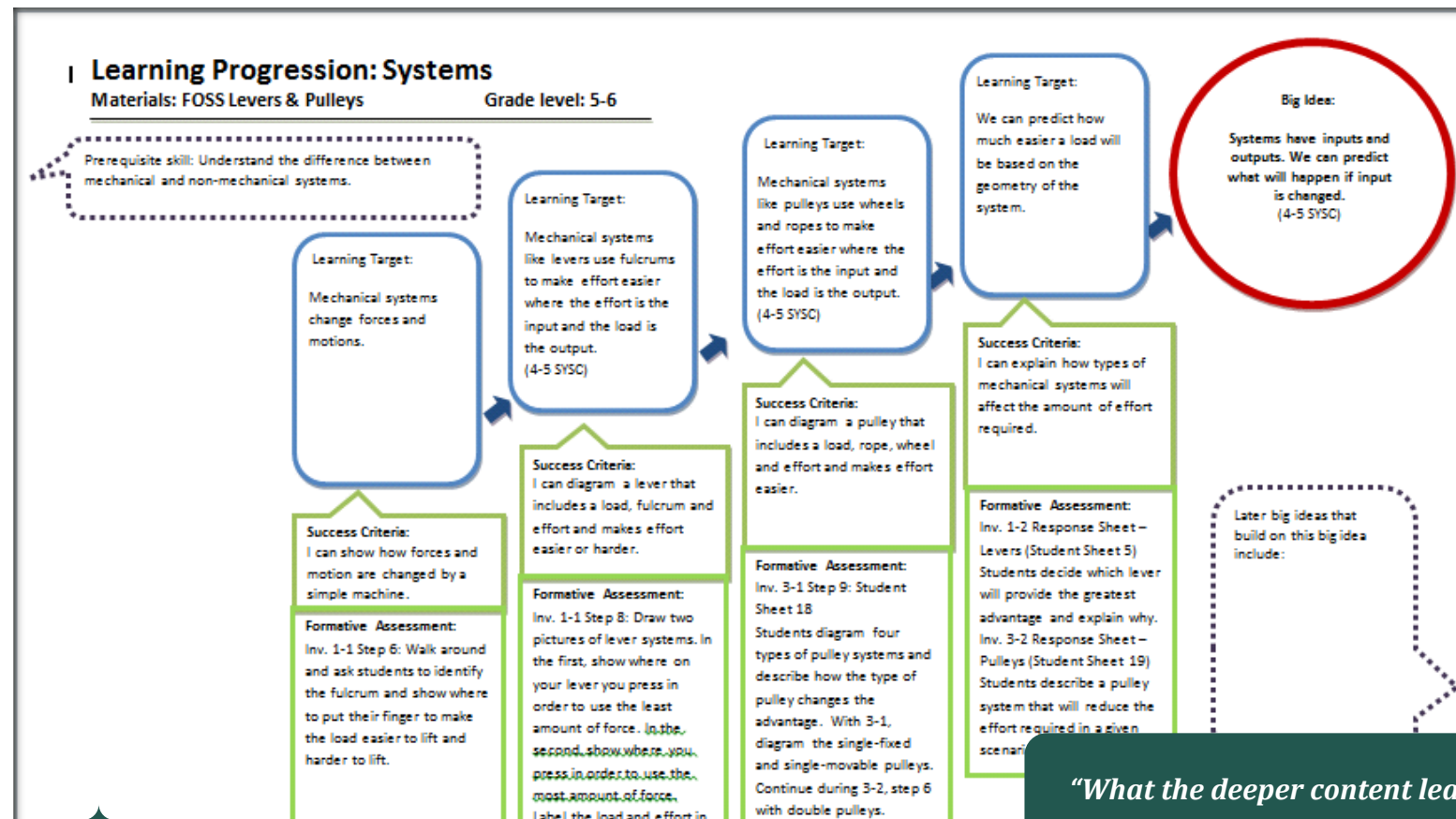
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"I see them [students] making connections that I don't think any of my past groups have made. It's pretty exciting."



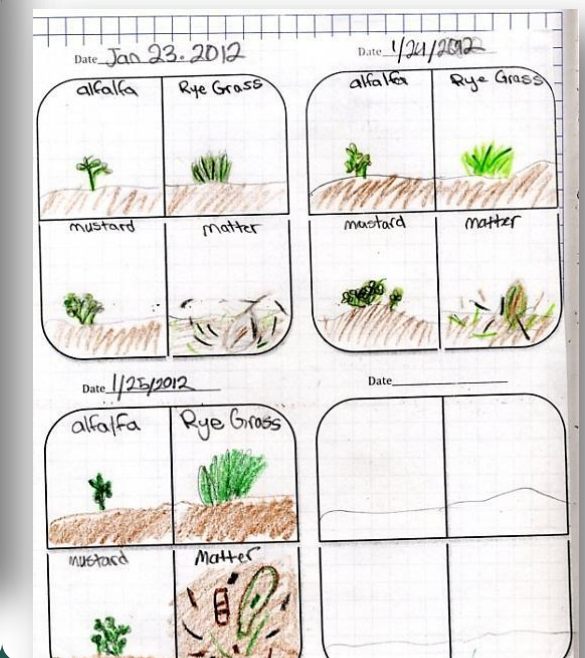
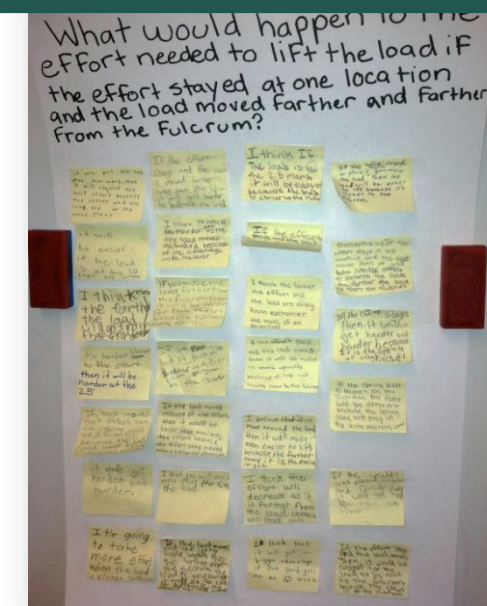
"What the deeper content learning did for me is it made me realize I could actually do that if I wanted to. I now feel better equipped to teach the kit because my understanding of it is much deeper than it was before. I now have more confidence about the subject matter and more passion about teaching it."

Outcomes of the NW ALPS project:

- 22 teachers received more than 80 hours each of science professional development
- Learning progressions and embedded formative assessments created for 10 commonly used science kits
- Teacher materials, student work samples, video of instruction and professional development guidelines available to share with others on the NWESD webpage at www.nwesd.org.

NW ALPS teachers:

- Significantly improved their understanding of science content area subject matter.
- Confidence in teaching science increased substantially on seven different measures.
- Use of formative assessment techniques (observation and discussion) increased dramatically.



"... we're saying 'let's do lots of little check-ins', that's the kind of thing that we're working on now, to get the formative assessments so they're briefer and more often, really pinpointing things more frequently."