

Webb, D. C., Romberg, T. A., Ford, M. J., & Burrill, J. (2005). Teacher Collaboration: Focusing on Problems of Practice. In T. A. Romberg & T. P. Carpenter (Eds.), *Understanding Mathematics and Science Matters* (pp. 231-251). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. **Posted with the permission of the publisher. Copyright 2005 by Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.**

Teacher Collaboration: Focusing on Problems of Practice

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In 1997, a group of middle school teachers in the Prairie Creek Middle School contacted researchers from the National Center for the Improvement of Student Learning and Achievement in Mathematics and Science (NCISLA) and expressed an interest in improving their mathematics and science program. This chapter focuses on the resulting successful collaboration.

In September 1997, we held an initial meeting with the interested mathematics and science teachers. After negotiations with administration, teach-

... and researchers collaborated on plans for the spring semester. In spring

During the 1998-1999 school year, teachers again implemented at least

The collaborative was initiated with the full support of the district admin

one new unit, either MiC or Boxer-based units. (Boxer is a flexible software system that supports student exploration of mathematics or science.) We in-

istration (including the district Director of Instruction and the Learning Resource Coordinator) and the middle school principal. Administrators

mathematics for Grades 8–10, intended to provide the equivalent of the traditional algebra, geometry, and advanced algebra courses by the end of

Teachers also began meeting informally in smaller groups to discuss their experiences teaching specific units. They found that this informal col-

collaboration. The middle school also reorganized teachers into teams in

ematics and science. Her primary reason for participating in the collabora-

... to introduce the concept directly and then to illustrate its use ...

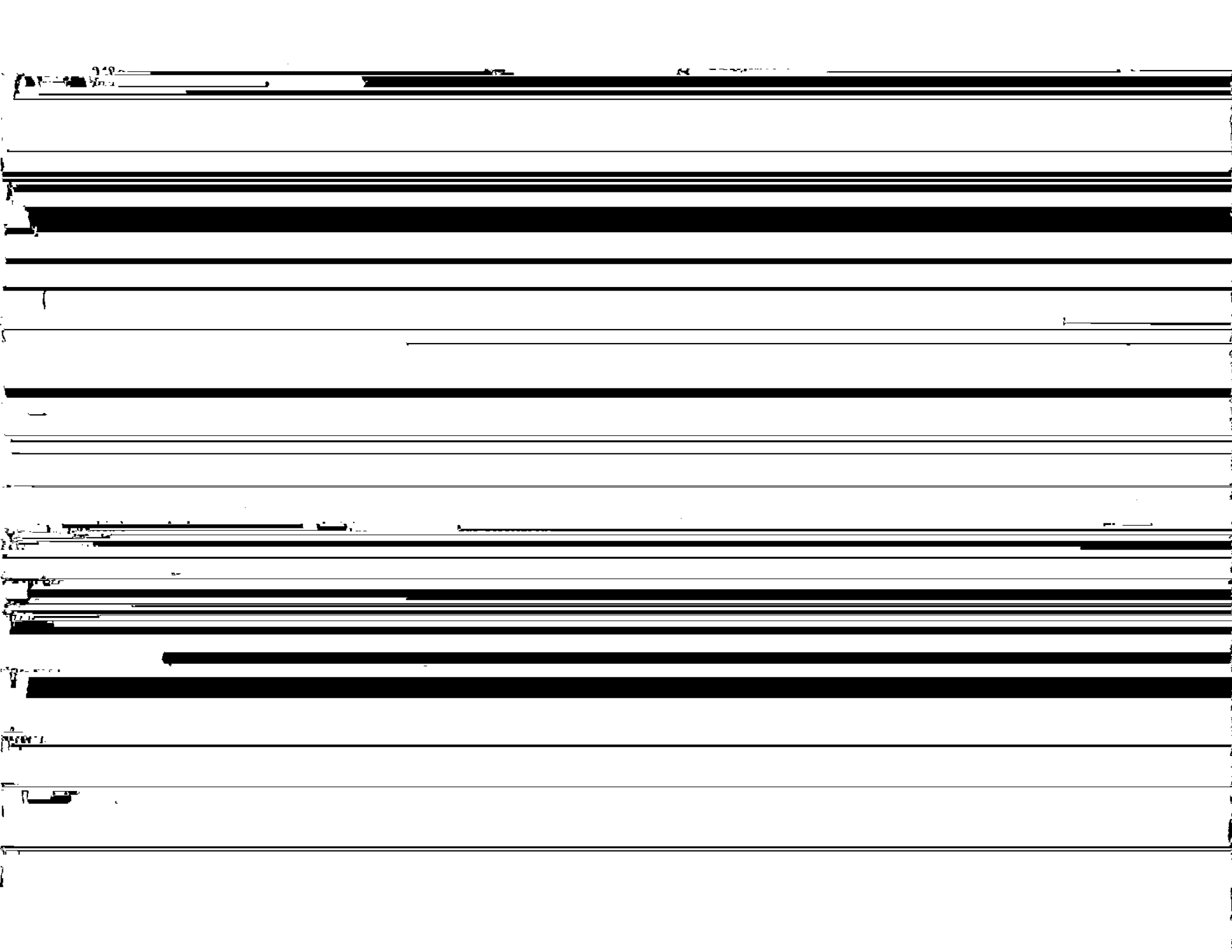
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resulted in trade-offs between meeting the needs of individual students and

implement assessment that was fair, informative, and essential for learning.



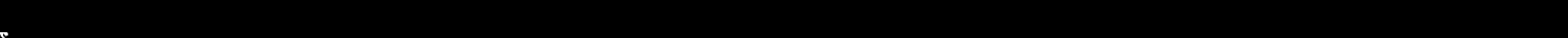
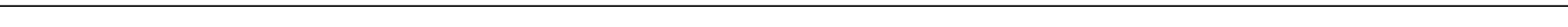
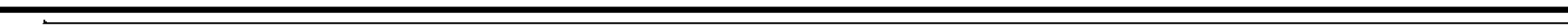
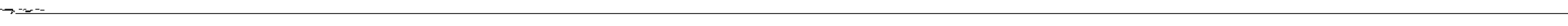
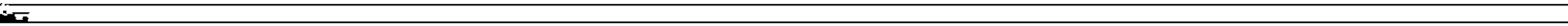
- In contrast to this difference, we found student performance on particular items in Grades 6 and 7 to be equivalent. In order to explain why performance on these items was equivalent when all other items saw performance differences across grades, we also cite student op-

CONCLUSION

The collaborative created a "safe" environment for teachers to share and

... to support

... of ...



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