Always Improving
through Defined Instructional Practices

By: James Small, Eastview Elementary School
Team Members Names: Christina Ary, Shari Phegley
Contact: jamsmall@fayette.k12.in.us

Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:

Our inquiry began with the desire to develop a simplified graphic to outline the facets of what 'Effective Instruction in Every Classroom' entail. We needed to organize the work into categories of expectations that were important to effective instruction. Categories that allowed the classroom teachers to feel the number of expectations was minimum, but would not eliminate any piece that is necessary for "Effective Instruction in Every Classroom" to be practiced. Therefore, the purpose of our action research was to develop this simplified graphic that defined the categories of effective instruction and one that could be displayed in classroom and explained by our teachers.

Statement of Your Team's Wondering:

How will developing clearly defined instructional expectations improve instructional outcomes for students?

Methods/Procedures:

The following outlines the procedures we followed to define instructioal practices in our school.

- August: Our focus was on team building activities
- September: Each teacher individually defined instructional practices that we should see every day, might see every day, and should never see
- October: Teachers worked in small groups and then as a faculty to create the first draft of our defined instructional practices.
- November: The leadership team worked to further combine and organize the defined practices.
- December: The school faculty revisited the draft which lead to a number of revisions and renegotiating.
- February:
  - o All teachers worked in cross-grade level groups to define the instructional practices at a granular level.
  - o All students in grade 4-6 were surveyed in relation to these practices.
  - o A graphic of our instructional practice was created and posted in each classroom.
  - o All teachers developed an individualized professional goal based upon 1 specific area of instructional practice.
  - o Instructional coaches began to support teachers in relation to their goals.
- March: All teachers evaluated their progress toward their goal and developed a new goal as appropriate. This is going to become a norm for faculty meetings.

The following were used to collect data to support our process:
- Level 2 Marzano survey data
- Our school improvement plan

- Trends found in data from classroom observations
- Observations during collaboration times
- Pre-survey data from students

Stating Your Team's Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of this journey to research, adopt and implement a single model of instruction for our staff, we found amazing benefits for our staff and students. Utilizing a single model of instruction provides us with a common language in which to discuss best practices for delivery of instruction and a framework for setting meaningful professional goals.

Another takeaway from this process was discovering the power of using Pineapple'n as a way to provide quality Professional Development for our staff. It cost us nothing and yet it paid high dividends. We are able to witness first hand how talented our staff truly is! In addition, teachers that had peers observe them felt valued and rewarded when they were able to showcase expertise in their craft. It also validated our staff as we found that we were already doing much of what we identified as best practices.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

Through this cycle of inquiry we learned that continuous improvement is possible and can be manageable. Our new mantra is "always improving." This process has given us a framework that allows all of us to pick a single area to improve, access needed resources and support, reflect upon our growth, and repeat the cycle. As we look to the future, the mindset of "Always Improving" will become our norm. We will continue to revisit and refine our agreed upon accepted instructional practice. FInally, during the 2017-2018 school year our goal is to prioritize our ELA standards following the HRS Level 3 protocol.

References:

Marzano, R., Warrick, P., Simms, J. (2014). A handbook for high reliability schools: The next steps in school reform. Bloomington, IN: Marzano Research Laboratory.