Can Teachers Describe the Major Components of our School-Wide Model of Instruction and More Importantly, Are We Actually Utilizing Those School-Wide Methods?

By: Ann-Marie Circle, Delphi Community High and Middle School
Team Members Names: Jennifer Landis, Doug Nelson, Theresa Traver
Contact: circlea@delphi.k12.in.us

Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:

On our school data from the Marzano Research team, our feedback on the indicator "I can describe the major components of our school-wide model of instruction" was our lowest score. Since instruction is the most important factor in student achievement, this caused us concern. Therefore, the purpose of our action research is to develop a school-wide, teacher driven model of instruction.

Statement of Your Team's Wondering:

With this purpose, we wondered if by having the teachers and staff create a school-wide model of instruction, would this improve instruction and students' academic success?

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insight into our wondering, we first felt we needed to understand the teacher's perspective of "what is great instruction," "what does great instruction look like," and "what are things teacher's do to maximize student learning?"

First (September): To do this, we surveyed the staff asking those questions. We then did the following in three PLC meetings:
   a) We placed teachers into collaborative groups that were diverse (different departments, different curricular areas and different age group of students). Each group was asked to compile a list of consistent answers and themes, choosing the top five from the survey results.
   b) Using google documents we compiled all the results of the groups five top answers. The data was very similar across the groups. We then had departments meet in their curricular area to identify the top five from each group.
   c) Finally, we meet as a faculty and discussed the results. The faculty agreed on what "great instruction" should look like so these brought another question to our ILPI groups forefront…..

Second (October): Teachers know what good instruction is, but is that what is actually happening in the classroom? We decided to survey the students.

We then sent a survey to student to complete in a "homeroom" time asking the following questions, "what does good instruction look like," "how do I learn best from a teacher," and "what can teachers do in the classroom to help prepare students for the real world?"

We compiled the data again and followed the same procedure as before. (diverse groups to select the top five, department meetings to narrow down and discussion, and then larger group faculty meeting)
Our IPLI group was amazed at the great answers from students and the impact of the collaboration was having on the teachers. We observed great conversations about what great instruction is for the first time.

Third: (December): Of course we were not satisfied. We had a list compiled of "what great instruction is" created by the teachers with the input of students, but again, the question of whether it is actually happening and how to collect data on this was bothering the IPLI group. Teachers receive limited feedback from their evaluators but, who is the most important patron of their learning? The students!

Therefore, we had each student evaluate the instruction in each of their classes and give feedback to their teachers after completion of their exams. The teachers had to give the survey to their students with at minimum the five questions, which reflected on what the staff decided as the top five traits of good instruction back in September. The staff was then allowed to add any other questions of their choosing. The feedback was for the teacher ONLY. It was not viewed by the administration nor used in their evaluations. The teachers were asked to self-reflect on the data and identify things that were going well, things they learned for the data and what change(s) did they want to implement 2nd semester. We asked that they reach out of their comfort zone.

Fourth (January – March): During the post evaluation meetings with their evaluator, the teachers not only discussed their formal observation but also, discussed their self-reflections from the student evaluations. It caused great talking points on good instruction with the evaluator.

Fifth and final (January – May): Again, we were trying to collect data on "are we actually using good instruction in the classroom" so we allowed the teachers to be a "student for a day" to see what was happening in other classrooms, observe new strategies and give positive feedback to their peers. Due to obtaining substitutes, we could only allow four teachers a week to do the "student of the day" therefore, it took several months to complete.

When the teachers were a student for the day, they had to follow ALL student/classroom rules. They had to abide by the bells and complete assignments/participate in whatever the class was doing. (yes, we had an English teacher have to take a calculus test and the math teacher had to lift weights to name a few examples). The experiment was to allow the teachers to experience what it is like to be a Delphi Community School student. After the day was completed, the teachers had to complete a survey reflecting on the day and write a positive notecard for each teacher they observed.

In May, the teachers received all the date from the teacher surveys. We again did our collaboration groups (diverse groups to select the common themes, department meetings to narrow down and discussion, and then larger group faculty meeting) to reflect on all we had done during the school year.

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

As a result of analyzing our data, we learned the following: a) Both teachers and students know what great instruction is. b) Students want more rigor, an active role in their education and more relevance to real life. c) Are we consistently implementing great strategies? Teachers are now recognizing the need and the inconsistency from class to class. d) Students and teachers both enjoyed the "student for the day." Both

commented that they gained a new perspective. Students enjoyed getting to know another side of their teacher. e) Teacher enjoy collaborating and discussing instruction.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

Our IPLI team started with a small wondering but throughout the process used the data to then branch into other wonderings. The entire process caused us to take our immediate question of "if by having the teachers and staff create a school-wide model of instruction, would this improve instruction and students' academic success" and it evolved into the insight that teachers and staff know what great instruction looks like but, are we truly utilizing those instructional methods in the classroom. Are we as a staff, holding each other accountable to consistently maintain expectations of great instructional methods, utilizing technology to its fullest, and ultimately, preparing our students for life outside our building. Another key aspect was the involvement with the students. We as educators, tend to forget to give the students a voice. By allowing the students to be part of the process, we noticed the students taking more ownership in their learning and in the learning process as well.

The entire process caused excellent collaboration and discussion about professional development that has been needed. Created a fertile environment of sharing ideas/resources with each other. Moving forward, we have just touched on the surface of truly developing PLC groups that function with data collection and constant reflection on our instructional practices. This experience has moved us forward as a staff, taught us to self-reflect and how to collaborate.

References:

References
Dana, N. F. (2009). Leading with passion and knowledge: The principal as action researcher. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
Dweck, C. S. (2012). Mindset: How you can fulfill your potential. London: Robinson.
Grenny, J. (2015). Influencer: The new science of leading change. North Ryde, NSW: McGraw-Hill.
Marzano, R. J., & Pickering, D. (2009). Dimensions of learning: Teacher's manual. Heatherton, Vic.: Hawker Brownlow Education.