

Defining Disrespect

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Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:

New Haven Primary uses a color chart system as part of our PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention Systems) model. Students that move up and down the color chart are denoted by clothespins in the classroom as a visual and by tickets for data. If moving down the color chart, students receive yellow, orange or red tickets. Students moving up the chart receive "Way-To-Go" or "Off the Chart" tickets. On the tickets, teachers can denote various common infractions or write their own. Teachers can select one, or they can select many depending on situation. The majority of the choices are clear with infractions listed as: off task, disruptive, directions/procedures, physical, lying, horseplay, and stealing. Also, one of the infraction areas is titled 'disrespect.' From Dr. Renae Azziz's research, we know 'disrespect' takes on different meanings by person, by family, and by culture. 'Disrespect' can also look different in a school with all young students such as New Haven Primary.

Very few of our ticket violations are for disrespect alone. Many of our tickets include another infraction with disrespect included. For this reason we wondered if our staff and our student had clear definitions of disrespect. Therefore, the purpose of our action research was to determine how teachers and staff at NHP define disrespect, how do students define disrespect, and do our staff and students understand its definition.

Statement of Your Team's Wondering:

With this purpose, we wondered how would defining disrespect school-wide, and explicitly teaching it's meaning to students affect it's usage on our ticket data?

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into our wondering we read more from Dr. Renae Azziz's research in Culturally Responsive Instruction: Definitions and Cultural Considerations. Dr. Azziz also presented in the East Allen County School district in 2012. Notes were reviewed from her presentation. These meetings helped start the collaboration conversations with staff.

First, we decided to continue with our current data collection processes of tickets and the goal setting from that process. Our data collection spreadsheet denotes: infraction, time and where, teacher, ethnicity and special needs. This process met the needs of collecting data on disrespect. This data was reviewed by the RtI and PBIS team regularly, but it was decided to be shared with staff at collaborations to give all staff members a better understanding of how our ticket data works and why it's recorded as such.

Providing teachers with this data and with the actual tickets in hand, a collaboration to defining disrespect as a staff was held. Bullet points were shared and the momentum of the meeting quickly halted to a standstill, when teachers could not come to a mutual, collaborative definition of disrespect.

Moving forward, we needed data from students about their thoughts and perceptions of disrespect. Teachers were empowered to have students share their thoughts on disrespect in a variety of ways: chart paper word webs, note cards, and journal entries.

Teachers then brought their student evidences to the next collaboration and shared whole staff. The intention with staff and student input was to lead our school towards developing lessons on disrespect that would be shared with all students, so all teachers and students had the same definition. But with the addition of student thoughts, we were even further apart.

This is where the procedure and plan had to shift. If we were struggling to define disrespect, how can we mark it on a ticket? When disrespect is marked on a ticket, what is that telling students? It has different meanings to them.

Though this analysis, teachers proposed the next step: No 'disrespect' on the ticket at all! Two teachers volunteered to pilot the new ticket for two weeks. When staff reconvened at the next collaboration, our two teachers reported that the tickets still met the needs of their classrooms without the need for a "disrespect" line item.

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

As a result of analyzing our data and collaborative discussions we learned that 1. 'Disrespect' is difficult to define for an entire school full of primary students. 2. Disrespect does not always mean the exact opposite of respect.

The difficulty in defining disrespect school-wide, corroborates our data because the 'disrespect' infraction on our tickets were inconsistent and had little reason to its usage. Teachers shared that they had a tendency to use it as "icing" for other infractions. 'Disrespect' was often checked in addition to not following 'directions and procedures.' Many discussions were noted that teachers took student misbehavior personally and therefore would mark the 'disrespect' in addition to other infractions because staff members believed they knew the intention of the misbehavior. This led to conversations with staff about how "student misbehavior is not about you."

The continuation of teaching the six character pillars became even more important as a result of our data and collaborative discussions. Respect is one of those six. If we ever want to attempt defining disrespect again, students and staff need a clear picture of what respect means. The resulting discussion determined that disrespect does not always mean the exact opposite of respect.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

This action research plan took us down unplanned paths. It was meaningful to allow for teacher-driven and student-driven thoughts when tackling the definition of 'disrespect.' We had a plan, but it was quickly diverted and an unknown path was forged. It was a "road less traveled" by far. Our team has learned that tackling a subjective issue is difficult and many conversations need to occur to implicate success. Our team has learned that our staff can handle tough conversations with support and facilitation. This is important information for future reference as other tough discussion may occur. Support and guidance through it will be imperative.

Moving forward, continued discussions about our tickets will need to occur regularly. The door has been opened and continued teacher input for its success is important. With eliminating the item 'disrespect' from the ticket, new problems may occur. The conversation must continue as we tackle the possibilities of new issues with the new ticket.

As we continue to improve our data collection pieces through tickets, our team will continue to review Dr. Azziz' work to ensure that our data collection pieces continue to support cultural responsiveness and objectivity.

References:

Azziz, R. (2012, September 7). Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies. Lecture presented at EACS Fall District In-service in Gym, New Haven, IN.

Azziz, R. (2011.). Culturally Responsive Teaching Strategies [Definitions and Cultural Considerations: Fact