

ENCOURAGING INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE

WESTERN WAYNE SCHOOLS

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HOW DID WE KNOW THAT WE NEEDED TO CLEARLY DEFINE STANDARDS OF INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES?

- LOW AND DECLINING TEST SCORES
- OBSERVATION DATA
- NEW STAFF MEMBERS

PURPOSE:

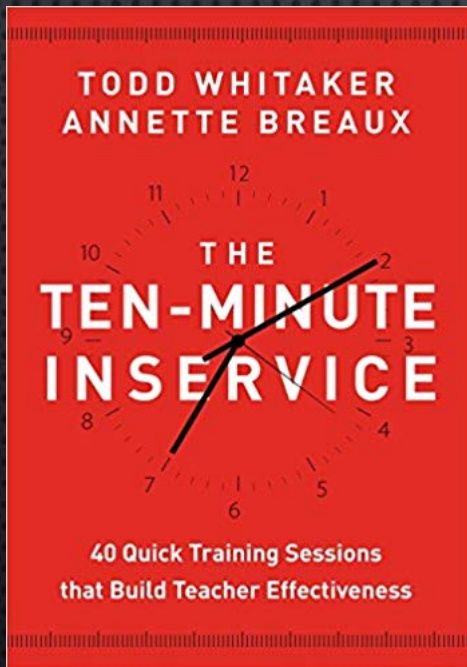
- THE PURPOSE OF OUR ACTION INQUIRY WAS TO DEVELOP A COMMON UNDERSTANDING AND COMMON LANGUAGE ABOUT BEST PRACTICE INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES.

OUR WONDERING:

- HOW MIGHT WE INCREASE CONSISTENCY IN INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES ACROSS ALL CLASSROOMS?

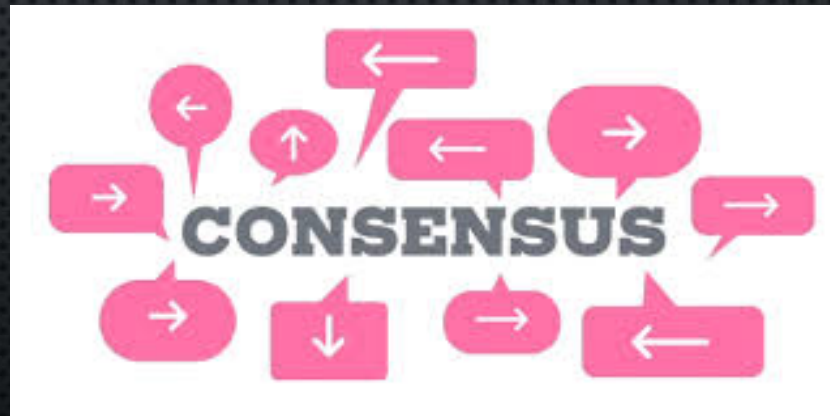
OUR ACTIONS

- PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSIONS



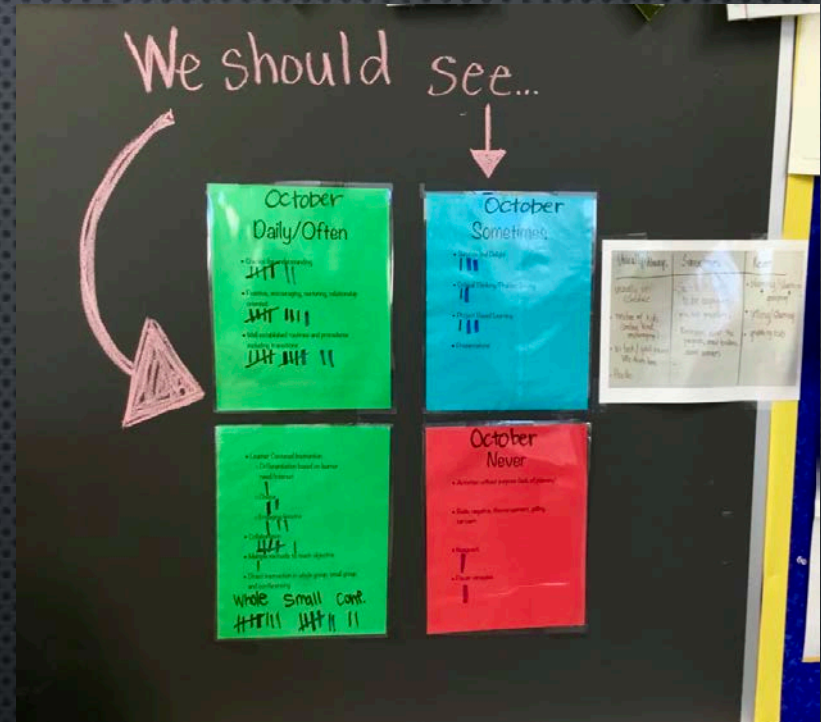
Effective Versus Ineffective Teaching Test

1. Use lots on hands-on learning activities. (Effective)
2. Enjoy a positive, friendly, rapport with students. (Effective)
3. Smile often. (Effective)
4. Appear serious most of the time. (Ineffective)
5. Use lots of worksheets. (Ineffective)
6. Raise your voice in anger and frustration when dealing with students. (Ineffective)
7. Appear calm and professional at all times. (Effective)
8. Allow for lots of structured student discussion during the learning process. (Effective)
9. Often allow students to work together to solve problems. (Effective)
10. Test what is taught in the same way that it was taught. (Effective)
11. Include "surprise" items on tests—items students did not know would be on the test. (Ineffective)
12. Engage in power struggles with students when required. (Ineffective)
13. Deal with student misbehavior in a private matter. (Effective)
14. Embarrass students in front of their peers. (Ineffective)
15. Plan detailed lessons designed to maximize critical thinking, learning, and engagement. (Effective)
16. Use the same lesson plans from year to year. (Ineffective)
17. Constantly seek to learn new and better ways to teach. (Effective)
18. Relate lessons to the lives of the students. (Effective)
19. Resist change. (Ineffective)
20. Accept and welcome change as a necessary part of growth. (Effective)
21. Often speak of students with fondness. (Effective)
22. Often speak of students with disapproval. (Ineffective)
23. Express belief in each student. (Effective)
24. Make tireless efforts to keep parents informed of student progress. (Effective)
25. Focus on student strengths. (Effective)
26. Appear to love teaching. (Effective)
27. Act as though teaching is a chore. (Ineffective)
28. Complain a lot. (Ineffective)
29. Collaborate with co-workers in order to improve effectiveness. (Effective)
30. Do whatever it takes to help a student succeed. (Effective)
31. Believe that all students are capable and treat them accordingly. (Effective)
32. Refuse to give up on any student. (Effective)



OUR ACTIONS:

- POST AGREEMENTS
- TALLY SIGHTINGS



OUR ACTIONS: LEARNING WALKS

- ASK TEACHERS TO DEMONSTRATE INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
- TEACHERS SIGN UP TO OBSERVE
- PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISCUSSION ABOUT WHAT THEY SAW

OUR ACTIONS: PLC WORK

- EACH MONTH, TEACHERS CHOSE AN INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY TO TRY AND THEN REPORTED BACK TO THE PLC THEIR FINDINGS.

OUR ACTIONS: COACHING OPPORTUNITIES

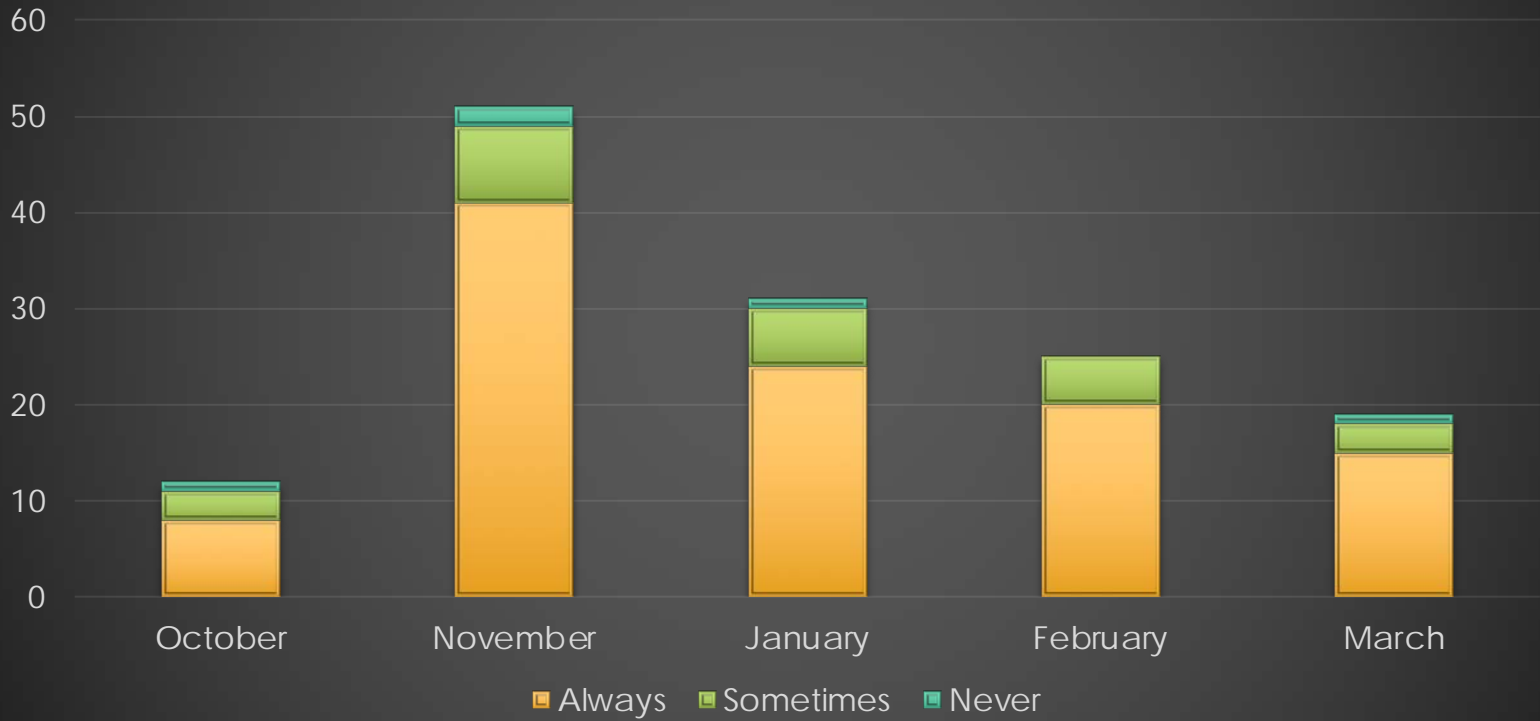
- DEMONSTRATION LESSONS BY PRINCIPAL AND COACHES
- OBSERVATIONS BY COACHES AT THE REQUEST OF TEACHERS

DATA COLLECTION

- TALLIES OF INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES
- OBSERVATION DATA
- COACHING REQUESTS
- PARTICIPATION IN LEARNING WALKS

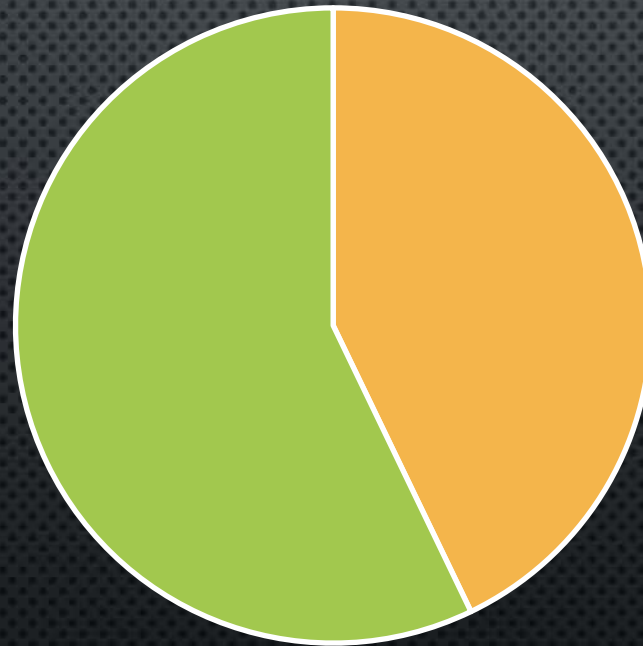
OUR DATA

Walk Through Data



OUR DATA

Learning Walk Participation

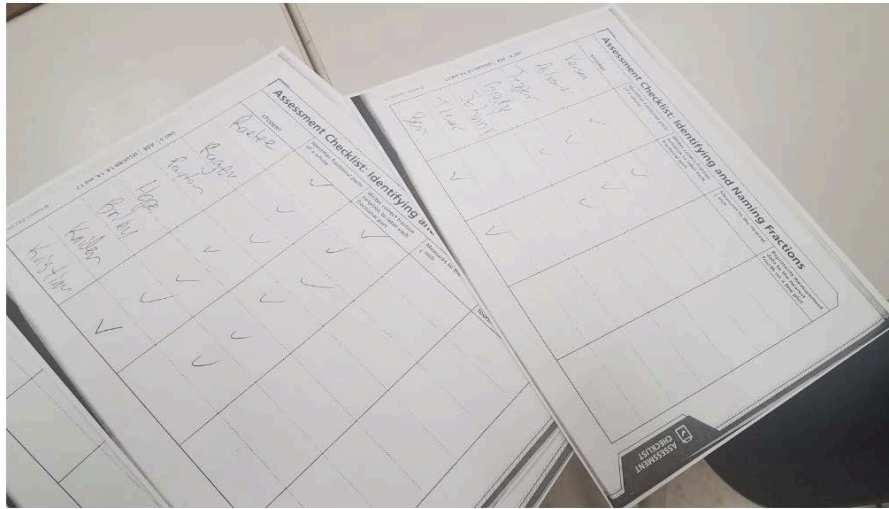


■ Participated ■ Opt Out

OUR DATA: PLC LEARNING

Teachers reported each month about ways they were implementing some of the strategies that we had agreed were best practice.

Check for Understanding - Using checklists like this one is a I have been turning the information that I previously have kept in my head. It's much easier to record these in Alma.



OUR DATA

- COACHING REQUESTS INCREASED GREATLY
 - FIRST GRADE MATH
 - FIRST GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS
 - SECOND GRADE LANGUAGE ARTS

OUR DISCOVERIES

- LEARNING STATEMENT #1:
 - INSPECT WHAT YOU EXPECT
- LEARNING STATEMENT #2:
 - INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY WORK IS CONTINUOUS
- LEARNING STATEMENT #3:
 - CELEBRATE THE SMALL WINS

INSPECT WHAT YOU EXPECT

- MORE FREQUENT WALKTHROUGHS
- TIERED OBSERVATION SCHEDULE
- POSTED EXPECTATIONS

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY WORK IS CONTINUOUS.

- EVERY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SESSION AND PLC AFFIRMS THE VISION, THE EXPECTATIONS, AND GIVES OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH.

CELEBRATE THE SMALL WINS.

- HIGHLIGHT RISK-TAKING IN PLCs, IN THE WEEKLY UPDATE, AND IN STAFF MEETINGS



WHERE WE ARE HEADING NEXT

- CONTINUOUSLY REVISITING THE INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES THAT WE AGREED ON AND REVISING THE LIST
- ALWAYS STRIVING TO BE IN CLASSROOMS MORE AS AN ADMINISTRATOR
- ADDING MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHERS TO OBSERVE OTHER TEACHERS AND COLLABORATE ON INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENTS

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Encouraging Instructional Excellence

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At Western Wayne Elementary School, standardized test scores have been on a downward trend in both English Language Arts and Mathematics. Poverty has become more severe. The teaching population has become younger with the retirements of more experienced staff members. Through administrative observations, it became apparent that there is inconsistency in instructional practices throughout the school and even among grade levels. The differences between one classroom to another in student outcomes on NWEA growth also substantiated the variation in instructional practice.

Therefore, the purpose of our action inquiry was to develop a common understanding and common language about best practice instructional strategies.

With this purpose, we wondered how we might increase consistency in instructional practices across all classrooms.

First, we began by using professional development opportunities to build consensus about best practice instruction. The book, *The Ten Minute Inservice* by Todd Whitaker and Annette Breaux, was helpful to begin this work. In one session, teachers used a self-reflective tool to discriminate between practices that they felt were effective vs ineffective strategies. That tool then led to discussion among staff about instructional practices.

Teachers also participated in book studies where they could choose between three books that each had a different perspective on instructional practices. They could choose from John Hattie's *10 Mindframes for Visible Learning* about effective practices, *Empower: What Happens When Students Own Their Own Learning* by John Spencer about giving learners voice and choice in their learning, or *The Invisible Classroom: Relationships, Neuroscience & Mindfulness in School* by Kirke Olson which is about behavior and social/emotional learning. Giving teachers choice in books for the book studies allowed for ownership in their learning and provided opportunities for them to share their learning with the entire group.

Next, we used a protocol for building consensus. By using a template of "Often/Sometimes/Never," teachers individually used sticky notes to name practices that they felt fit in the categories of methods that should be seen often or daily, that should be seen sometimes, or practices that should never be seen. Then in small groups, teachers began to look for similarities in contributions within their group. The approaches that were agreed upon

were taken to chart paper where we sorted again. This consensus building activity led to a final chart that was laminated and posted in the teacher work room.

As walkthroughs were conducted, the principal tallied practices that were seen and posted those tallies without teacher names on the laminated chart. This was a way to track the practices in a non-threatening way and to keep the staff engaged in the challenge of increasing some practices and decreasing other practices.

Additionally, we established a routine for learning walks where teachers could observe a guided view of other teachers' instructional practices with our instructional coaches. As a leadership team, we discussed teachers who we felt would be great demonstration sites for other teachers. We asked them if they would be willing to host. After they agreed, we asked for volunteers to participate in the instructional walk. Teachers stayed together for the observations through three sessions of thirty minutes. At the end of the school day, the teachers spent time debriefing with the demonstration teachers. Observing teachers were given guidelines to spend time discussing only positive feedback about the experience so that it would be a low-risk activity for those who were making themselves vulnerable for the sake of the learning of the group. This was a very positive experience that we will continue.

During our designated Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings, we designated one session a month for each team to choose an instructional strategy from our "Often/Sometimes/Never" chart to focus on implementation or improvement. Teachers submitted artifacts to Google Classroom to share with their PLC group and the instructional coaches. This process created more opportunities for teachers to learn from each other.

Throughout this focused initiative to improve consistency in instructional practices, the principal conducted demonstration lessons by teaching units for teachers. Teachers within the same grade level were given coverage so that they could all participate in observing. Additionally, the instructional coaches offered to observe current practices for those teachers who requested feedback and coaching.

To collect data, we used the walkthrough information about implementation from the tallies on the published chart. This data directly corresponded with the amount of walkthroughs conducted. In the future, walkthroughs should be consistent in number. We also used the artifacts submitted by teachers in PLC meetings as evidence of their work. We used Google Classroom to share those artifacts within each PLC. We collected requests for coaching and demonstrations. These requests continued to increase throughout the school year. We also counted participation in learning walks. 43% of teachers participated in this opportunity.

We made many discoveries through this action research project. First, it is important to inspect what you expect. Secondly, instructional strategy work in continuous. Thirdly, you must identify and celebrate the small wins.

It became clear that defining expectations is not enough to create positive change in improved instructional strategies. It is necessary to intentionally inspect those practices that you wish to be incorporated in daily classroom instruction. Posting the expectations was the first step, but including the frequency of observing those practices created urgency and intentionality in instructional practices. Walkthroughs naturally increased through this action research project, but it should continue to be a frequent practice of the administrator. Also, the administrator used a tiered system to support teachers within the observation schedule. Those teachers who needed more support were given more time slots in the administrator's observation schedule than others. This intentional shift created a more efficient and purposeful observation schedule. Of all of the discoveries, this practice was the most beneficial.

Instructional strategy work is continuous. With teacher turn-over and the influx of scientific research, we must continue to evaluate our practices and align them to our vision and values as a school. We must continue to clearly define best practices and work to develop reflective practices as educators that allow us to learn, grow, and improve.

Celebrating progress is so important to the work. Teachers who are effective in instructional practices need to be celebrated and encouraged. Teachers who are reflective and have an interest in improvement should be distinguished. Progress as a school should be attributed to the hard work of being a group of educators who continue to learn.

From here, there is more work to be done. The instructional strategy list must be a living document that is continuously revised and improved. With new learning, must come applied practice. We will continue to learn about how to meet the needs of our learners and make changes accordingly.

The principal must continue to strive to make their time in the classroom the highest priority of their role. My goal is to be in every classroom every day, but my time is often stolen by the latest unexpected issue. I found through this process that scheduling my time in classrooms created much more intentionality on my part and allowed my classroom time to be the priority that I wanted it to be. After my contractually required observations were completed, I found myself becoming less disciplined about scheduling my time. I want to do better about continuing my urgency from the beginning of the year to the end of the year in the future.

We are also going to provide more opportunities for teachers to participate in learning walks throughout the year. Allowing this opportunity to be voluntary completely changed the outcomes of these from teachers' past experiences. It changed from something to complete as a requirement to a learning opportunity that was engaging and fruitful.

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