

From Secondary to Elementary Principal: Developing a Deeper Understanding of Elementary Math

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Background That Led to Your Inquiry:

I was a secondary English teacher, secondary principal, and I just became an elementary principal. The elementary world was all brand new, specially elementary math. Therefore, the purpose of my action research was to gain personal and professional growth in the area of elementary mathematics and to transform into a proven mathematics instructional leader.

Statement of Your Wondering:

With this purpose, I wondered how creating and collaborating with a math team would help me develop a better understanding of elementary math and identify resources, supports, and vision for teachers.

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into my wonderings, I established a math team at the beginning of the school year. Members of the team were representatives from each grade level K-6. I formally met monthly to discuss and listen to current math curriculum being covered. I utilized a simple agenda and reflection page to be intentional about discussion staying focused on math curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Also, I met bi-weekly with individual grade levels to discuss and listen to math curriculum successes and concerns. As a result of our conversations, I decided to observe every teacher in the building during their math block. I reflected over my anecdotal notes of meetings and observations to help make decisions moving math forward at Harrison with input from grade level teachers.

Stating Your Learning and Supporting it with Data:

As a result of analyzing my data, I was able to have a better understanding of elementary math, and what my teachers needed to help support math instruction. Our monthly and bi-monthly meetings allowed for open discussions of ideas and ways to help meet the needs of students in the area of math. One area that really sparked an interest from teachers was the use of technology particularly the use of iPads and apps. Knowing what the teachers needed, I was able to align PD for teachers while gaining personal confidence as a mathematics instructional leader of the building.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

The more I had intentional conversations with teachers about math, the more I felt empowered while building a deeper understanding of mathematics at the elementary level. Teachers started approaching me more asking me what I thought about particular mathematics topics and having math rich conversations. My intentional conversations started leading to deeper level of conversations about data and how the results can move students forward in their learner. I felt more confident as a mathematics instructional leader.