

Making the Most of Instructional Resources and Time

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Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:

Spencer Elementary IREAD3 passing percentages have decreased over 10% in the last three years. Thirty percent of students entering 3rd grade are proficient in the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI), when they are leaving 2nd grade with 85% proficient. This is more than just summer loss. Additionally, upon making observations, there was not a sense of urgency at SES, especially in 1st – 4th grades. Therefore, the purpose of our action research was to create a system that allowed for more efficient use of human capital, instructional resources and time and a system that would impact student achievement in third grade.

Statement of Your Team's Wondering:

With this purpose, we wondered, how could we better prepare our students in primary grades, so that they are entering 3rd grade at a higher proficiency rate, thus making the goal of 100% passing on IREAD-3 more achievable?

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into our wondering, we created a blitz schedule in first and second grades that would streamline instructional time and allow for more adults in one grade level at a time. In February, we created and implemented a WIN (What I Need) time where students were grouped based on data and placed into reading interventions or placed with the classroom teacher to enrich their core instruction. Interventions are now meeting 5 days a week with fidelity. The team visited Southport Elementary and observed this type of scheduling in progress, as well as, conducted walk-throughs daily looking for a sense of urgency, engagement and appropriate use of staff and materials. The team also sent out a survey to the staff to gain feedback on their perception of the new schedule and time management going on in first and second grades.

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

As a result of analyzing our data, three important things we learned include: 1) teachers gained 30, in some cases, 40 additional minutes of instructional time, 2) there is a higher sense of urgency in first and second grades, 3) students are more engaged.

With regard to teachers gaining more instructional time, we saw an increase of time in the day simply by structuring the time. We have a breakfast in the classroom program, and prior to February, teachers weren't starting lessons until 8:45 a.m., sometimes 9:00 a.m. or later, and our school day starts at 8:25 a.m. With the new schedule and our careful monitoring, we found that teachers were starting instruction by 8:30 every morning.

Based on our three to five minute walk-throughs, the team found that there was a sense of urgency about 92% of the time. Students were working, teachers transitions were more engaging and quicker, and the students reminded each other of procedures to manage their own time.

Based on our three to five minute walk-throughs, the team found that students were engaged over 90% of the time. Students commented in interviews that they like WIN time and look forward to it. Attendance is up in some classrooms on Fridays because students look forward to WIN time.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

In conclusion, our team has learned that our school has some progress to be made when it comes to time management and procedures, but our first and second grade team has shown us that it is possible and that we have a staff that is willing to problem solve at Spencer Elementary.

Some challenges that we faced during implementation were when we had all school events that required the schedule to change, as well as, ISTEP+ testing that required many staff members to be assessing students. The team worked diligently to not upset the schedule or cancel reading interventions due to conflicts.

During our implementation of the schedule, teams started to change the way they worked together to become more focused in planning and goal oriented. Inclusion staff is now able to service more students with IEPs appropriately rather than just conduct reading interventions all day.

The first and second grade teams have paved the way for implementation of this type of schedule throughout the school. Teachers are now meeting to discuss the amount of time spent on specific content, i.e. phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension. The team is creating a schedule that will work for the whole school so that all are making the most of the time we have for instruction. As we close out our school year, we are excited to see the impact that this type of scheduling and time management will have on our students' achievement.

References:

N/A