

Engaging Teachers in Collaborative Observations

Spring Mill Elementary School

Principal

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Teacher Leaders

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**WASHINGTON
TOWNSHIP SCHOOLS**

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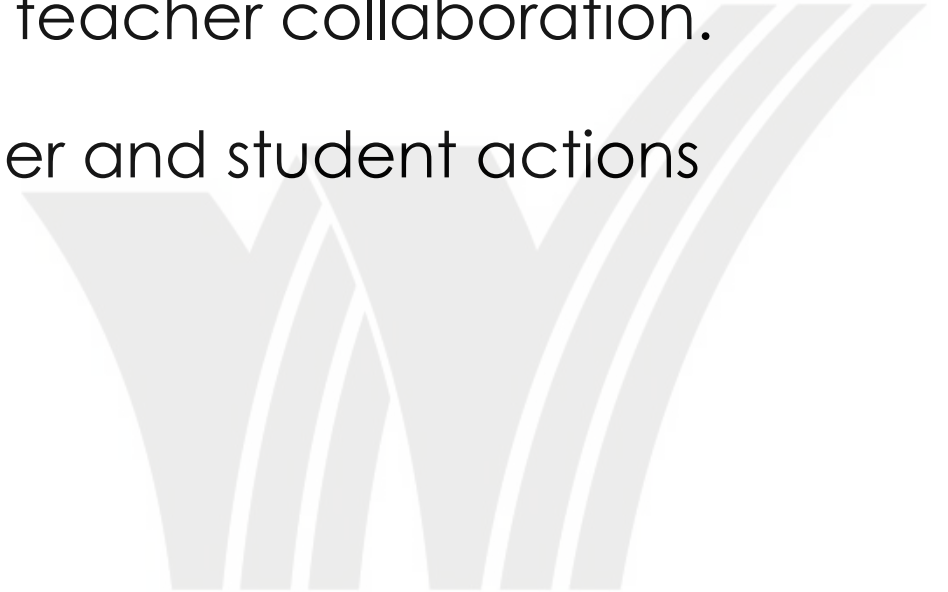
Washington Township Schools

Background Leading to this Inquiry

- Inquiring about how to move Spring Mill Elementary School from a good school to a great school.
- Teacher leaders attended BOY data meetings in the fall.
 - Noticing performance that matched our school goals (52% math & 54% reading)
- Analyzing district benchmark data for reading and math.
- As a team, we decided to align our inquiry with our district core target practices (ELEVATE) to identify what effective teaching should look like at SMES.
- We made the decision to focus on ELEVATE Core Target Practice One: Student-Centered, Responsive Instruction.

Purpose of This Inquiry

- Elevate teaching and increase student learning.
- Create a shared leadership model through teacher collaboration.
- Provide opportunities to reflect upon teacher and student actions during the work.



Our Wondering

How can defining Student-Centered Responsive Instruction (ELEVATE Core Target Practice One) lead to elevating teacher instruction and student learning at SMES?



Our Actions

Our team identified what student-centered responsive instruction is and created a user friendly form that we can utilize for data collection.

What does student-centered responsive instruction look like at SMES?

1. Are we explicitly modeling what we want kids to do or know?
 - a. Are the students aware of what they are learning?
 - b. Can they identify why it is important?
2. Is there evidence of student engagement?
 - a. No opt out - ask a friend, but always going back
 - b. Paraphrasing
 - c. Turn and talks
 - d. Active participation (nonverbal reminders or flash your work)
3. How does the teacher continually check for student understanding during instruction?
 - a. Methods: movement, whiteboard, turn and talks
4. Is there evidence of differentiation?
 - a. What does that look like? Small group, partnerships, individualized instruction, enrichment

Sharing our Project with SM Staff

2nd}

- Intentional*
- *Student choices
- *Developmentally appropriate*
- *Data driven*
- *student differences*
- *Differentiation*
- student to student interactions

5th}

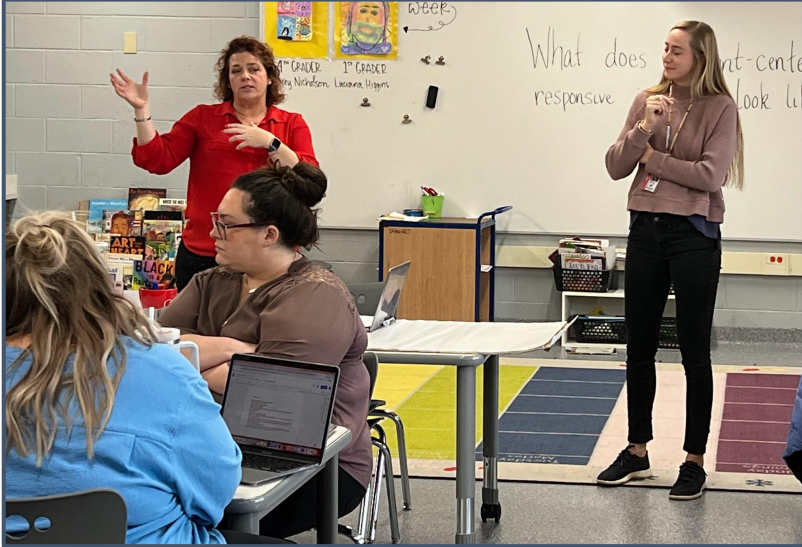
- Data Driven ~~Instruction~~ Instruction
- Small Groupings on Student needs (flexible + fluid)
- Individualized, differentiated
- Scaffolded, manipulatives, stems, graphic organizers
- Extensions
- Explicit
- Formative assessments
- Real-world application
- Loud, talking, interactive
- Practice Time
- Reflection + Recognition - error analysis (correct + incorrect work)

3rd}

- ★ differentiation
 - groups/partnerships
- ★ student talk
- ★ student choice
- ★ responsive to individual student interests
- ★ interactive/engaged
 - teacher is facilitator
 - productive struggle

1st} giving each student what they need while still meeting curriculum.

- meeting where students they're at
- Using student data to guide instruction
- Parent/Teacher connections
- incorporating Culture - interests



Data Collection

A google form was created to match the indicators of what we determined were essential indicators that represent Student-Centered, Responsive Instruction.



Our Data

How does the teacher continually check for student understanding during instruction?



Is there evidence of student engagement?



Our Discoveries

Plus

- Where all indicators are present, student engagement was high.
- Strong sense of classroom community with teachers and students working in partnership.
- Instructional minutes were maximized making teacher engagement throughout instruction high.

Grow

- Turn and talks are occurring frequently, but often not as intentional or as purposeful as they could be, for the appropriate amount of time.
- Sometimes Turn and Talks created off-task behavior. Are teachers circulating to determine if students are benefiting from the turn and talks?

Wish

- Small group differentiation.
- Making sure students understand the purpose (why the learning matters / connections).
- Explicit modeling (gradual release).

Where We Are Heading Next?

- Creating more opportunities for Lab classroom experiences.
- Creating opportunities for routine Peer Learning walks.
- Spring Mill staff will collaborate in the fall to develop a school wide instructional model based off of the ELEVATE Core Target Practices. We will begin with Core Target Practice One, Student-Centered, Responsive Instruction.

Bibliography

[Elevate Core Target Practices](#)

Thank you!

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Template for Team AR Narrative - Year 2

Principal Name: Ms. Kellée Merritt

School Name: Spring Mill Elementary School

Team Members' Names: Margaret Hartnagel, Katie Sundheimer, and Kellée Merritt

Principal's Email Contact: kmerritt@msdwt.k12.in.us

Background Leading to Our Inquiry (Slide 2)

Our team worked collaboratively in an effort to inquire, “How can we make a school like Spring Mill Elementary that is a good school; a great school?” Therefore, our two teacher leaders, Kate and Maggie, were asked to sit in on our beginning of year data meetings in the fall to identify trends through observing teacher actions and analysis of student performance data. As these data meetings occurred, it was clear that teachers who were identified as being effective had student performance data that met or exceeded our school goal of 52% proficiency in math and 54% proficiency in reading. This led to a discussion of what effective teaching looks like at Spring Mill Elementary School. Are there specific actions that teachers who are considered highly effective do routinely that others do not. Knowing that, in 2021, our district developed the ELEVATE Core Target Practices K-12, we believed that defining what effective instruction looked like had already been done. Therefore, we decided to utilize the first Core Target Practice, Student-Centered Responsive Instruction, as the focus for our work.

The Purpose of Our Inquiry (Slide 3)

Therefore, the purpose of our action inquiry was to: elevate teaching and grow student learning, create a shared leadership model through teacher collaboration, and provide opportunities to reflect upon teacher and student actions during the work.

Our Wondering (Slide 4)

With this purpose, we wondered how can defining student-centered responsive instruction (ELEVATE Core Target Practice 1) lead to elevating teacher instruction and student learning at SMES?

Our Actions (Slides 5-7)

First-Our team identified what student-centered, responsive instruction is using the ELEVATE Core Target Practice One as a guide to develop four indicators.

Second-Our team created a user friendly Google Form that we utilized for data collection when teacher leaders would observe teachers for the purpose of identifying: What does student-centered responsive instruction look like at SMES?

Third- We decided, using the indicators already identified within the ELEVATE Core Target Practices K-12 document, to focus on the following teacher and student actions during peer observations conducted by our teacher leaders.

1. Are we explicitly modeling what we want kids to do or know?
 - a. Are the kids aware of what they are learning?
 - b. Can they identify why it is important?
2. Is there evidence of student engagement?
 - a. No opt out - ask a friend, but always going back
 - b. Paraphrasing
 - c. Turn and talks
 - d. Active participation (nonverbal reminders or flash your work)
3. How does the teacher continually check for student understanding during instruction?
 - a. Methods: movement, whiteboard, turn and talks
4. Is there evidence of differentiation?
 - a. What does that look like? Small group, partnerships, individual enrichment

Fourth-Teacher leaders identified specific teachers to observe and scheduled a time to visit their classrooms. These observations began as individual visits. However, our teacher leaders found value in conducting these observations as a team so they could collaborate and debrief their findings.

Fifth- As the administrator, I began by providing coverage for the teacher leaders that were participating in the peer observations by teaching in their classrooms. When this was not possible, the coverage extended to members of the building leadership team (assistant principal and instructional coaches).

Sixth-In a staff meeting, grade level teams, along with Special Education Resource and ENL teachers, worked collaboratively using chart paper to define what Student-Centered, Responsive

Instruction looks like in their classrooms and what it should look like at Spring Mill Elementary.

Finally-As a team, we reviewed the anchor charts created as a staff, revisited our initial definition, and reviewed the data along with the assistant principal. We discovered that many of our findings were in direct alignment with what building administrators had observed during routine informal and formal observations. These findings were analyzed and then categorized. They were later shared with the Spring Mill staff during a weekly meeting as a way to celebrate progress made towards our goals and to also identify areas for continued growth as a teaching staff.

Data Collection (Slides 7-8)

Data was collected using the Google Form Created- [Responsive Instruction](#).

Our Data (Slides 7-8)

A QAR code has been added as a way to access all of the documents created as well as artifacts used to collect data.

Our Discoveries (Slide 9)

- **Learning Statement One:** We observed a direct correlation between teacher's intentional actions that lead to student engagement being high.
- **Learning Statement Two:** Oftentimes the absence of intentional teacher actions, even when using familiar engaging routines, can cause unintended consequences that do not increase student engagement or intended learning outcomes.
- **Learning Statement Three:** Differentiated small group instruction is a proven practice that can help our students better demonstrate their understanding as they work toward mastery.

The best way to capture our findings was to capture them in terms of plus, grow, wish:

Plus

- Where all indicators are present, student engagement was high.
- There was a strong sense of classroom community with teachers and students working in partnership.
- Instructional minutes were maximized making the teachers level of engagement throughout their instruction high.

Grow

- Turn and talks are occurring frequently. However, this familiar engagement routine was often not as intentional or as purposeful as it could be. In some cases it was because they

were not for the appropriate amount of time.

- Sometimes Turn and Talks created off-task behavior.
- We were left with the question, “Are teachers circulating to determine if students are benefiting from the Turn and Talks?”

Wish

- We should see teachers and students engaged in small group differentiated instruction more often than naught because we know that is the most responsive instruction and ensures that students’ diverse learning needs are met.
- We have to be intentional about ensuring that our students understand the purpose; why the learning matters and how it connects to current or future learning.
- Explicit modeling, using all components of the gradual release model, is the optimal way to ensure that students truly understand what is expected of them as they move to independent practice.

Where We Are Headed Next (Slide 10)

Our team has learned that the majority of our teachers are in a place where they are hungry for collaboration, meaningful professional development, and the opportunity to improve their teaching craft as a whole. In addition, our teacher leaders have obtained a better appreciation for the evaluation process having observed teachers through the peer observation process.

We have started a movement within our building by providing on-site professional development through strategic actions which is encouraging all teachers, both novice and master, to participate for the purpose of growing their individual and our collective repertoire of skill. We have committed to the following practices because we have seen first-hand how it offers a space for teachers to learn by seeing and doing. Subsequently, it has provided a place for experimentation, observation, and purposeful practice.

- Creating more opportunities for Lab classroom experiences.
- Creating opportunities for routine Peer Learning walks.

Our Teacher leaders, Katie and Maggie, will be presenting our Action Research. When we reconvene this fall, Spring Mill staff will collaborate to develop a school wide instructional model based off of the ELEVATE Core Target Practices. This work will help us be more explicit in our expectation of what we expect for every classroom within our school building.

As I reflect on my work as a building leader, what I have learned is that teachers have the ability to transform a school more than most educational programs and initiatives. They provide a closer approximation for their peers making the work that is happening in their classroom seem more accessible. In addition, teachers see the work of their peers as something they can emulate, which has the potential to create both timely and sustainable actions for an entire school community. I have learned that the best way to distribute my

leadership while creating a shared vision for Spring Mill Elementary, as an optimal learning environment for all learners, is by strategically creating opportunities for ownership and shared leadership within the context of the work we are currently doing at the district level. This has not only created better alignment of a district-wide initiative; it has allowed us to customize this work making it more explicit and meaningful at the building level. As a result, we are transforming practice one classroom at a time.

Bibliography (Slide 11)

[Elevate Core Target Practices](#)