

# Setting Instruction Goals and Increasing Student Engagement

By: Karen Wesely, Charlestown Middle School

Team Members Names: Aimee Bowling, Christy Tolliver

Contact: [kwesely@gccschools.com](mailto:kwesely@gccschools.com)

## **Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:**

Charlestown Middle School has consistently been given a C letter grade since the beginning of the letter grade accountability system. Aligning instructional strategies and increasing engagement are the keys to improving student growth and achievement. We wondered about the connection between aligning instructional practices and student engagement.

## **Statement of Your Team's Wondering:**

Will the creation of a common school instruction model, along with the creation of individual teacher goals, result in higher engagement during instructional walkthroughs?

## **Methods/Procedures:**

To gain insights into our wondering, we began our process by reflecting on baseline data from administrative walkthroughs. We looked at the data in our Building Leadership Team, as well as within our departments. Each department then completed their version of a What You Should See Daily/Sometime/Never chart for good instruction practices.

Each department's model was shared out to the entire staff. The staff was given time to reflect on all of the models. We then held a staff meeting to merge them into one model. Staff members discussed various items on the list that made all three columns. There was needed debate on some line items, especially those in the "Never" category. It was rich dialogue.

Once the school-wide model was complete, staff members were encouraged to choose one area they wanted to improve practice and post it in their rooms. We gave them a "Teach Like a Pirate" goal sheet to post. Walkthrough data was collected from January-April and compared to the original August-October data used as the baseline.

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

As a result of analyzing our data, we learned there was an increase in the High Engagement and Students Dialogue using Academic Language categories. We also determined that the school-wide instruction model should replace our school mission statement.

During administrative walkthroughs, we noted a 3.2% increase in High Engagement, a 3.0% increase in Managed Engagement, and a 1.0% decrease to Disengagement. We noted a 2.9% increase in students dialoguing using academic language. While the data didn't prove to be a large increase from previous practice, it was an increase nonetheless. An average 3% increase in the positive direction was seen as a solid trend.

given that the data collection time span included two key standardized testing windows. Changes in practice take time so we were pleased with the results.

### **Providing Concluding Thoughts:**

There were some side effects of this action research process that proved to be more helpful than just the small increase in engagement practices. Dialogue with staff members resulted in changing the wordy CMS mission statement to the school-wide instruction model. We felt the mission statement should simply reflect exactly what we expect to happen in our classrooms.

Also, the individual department instruction charts showed variances in the depth of knowledge amongst different departments in terms of practice. This will lead to more targeted professional development for each department.

Finally, the most powerful side effect of this process was that our English-Language Department developed a deeper understanding of just how little the other departments know about literacy practices. They initiated, on their own, to help cross-content professional development conversations about how to teach literacy standards outside of the ELA classroom.

### **References:**

N/A