

Shared Instructional Strategies and Teacher Goals

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Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:

Vaile Elementary is a preschool through fourth grade building that is at 95% free/reduced lunch. There are approximately 312 students at Vaile, and Vaile is a Title I school-wide building. Our team's "Wondering" began when we had staff take the HRS Level 2 survey. The lowest indicator was 2.1: The school leader communicates a clear vision as to how instruction should be addressed in the school. At this point Vaile did not have a specific document outlining the instructional strategies that as a staff we expect to see. Therefore, the purpose of our action research was to create with our staff a specific instructional strategies document that teachers can use to begin to set individual goals

Statement of Your Team's Wondering:

With this purpose, we wondered: How will developing an effective instructional practices document and having teachers set individual goals positively impact teacher growth?

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into our wondering, we began by having individual teachers fill out a document titled, "Vaile Instructional Strategies". There were three columns: "Should See, Might See, and Never See". So the first step was having teachers do it individually. The second step was getting grade-level teachers together so they could consolidate their documents into a grade-level document.

The leadership team then reviewed the grade-level documents the teachers created and combined them into a school-wide document. The Vaile teachers were given an opportunity at a Tuesday professional development time to review, reflect, and edit the school-wide document.

When the document was complete, the teachers chose 1-3 strategies they felt they wanted to explore or improve upon. The teachers had opportunities to work with our instructional coach, and they completed a weekly reflection at the beginning of each Tuesday professional development time. Also, each month, teachers were able to get into collaborative groups based on their goals, and they were able to discuss their progress along with the things that were going well, and the things that were not going well. Teachers could use their weekly reflections as their data piece, but they were also encouraged to keep another piece of data as they were going through this process.

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

As a result of analyzing our data, two important things we learned include:

1. The teachers appreciated having the extra time to focus on an area they felt like they needed to improve.
2. We saw an increase in effective instructional strategies being used in the classroom.

Many teachers did express with the Leadership team and also through their reflections that they wished they had more time to work on their "mini-action plans" during school. One teacher stated: "I wish I had more time during school to work on my action plan, but that's not how things work." For next school year the Leadership team is discussing different ways we can possibly make this process easier for teachers next school year so it will have a bigger impact on their goals and student achievement.

The Leadership team began to see increased use of the instructional strategies that were defined on the school-wide document. Most notably we saw more teachers utilizing guided math and math centers, and we also began to see more teachers incorporating data folders into their classrooms. Even though we did see major changes in instructional strategies throughout the school, teachers expressed some interest in continuing this process for next year.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

Through this process our Leadership team learned that the teachers are very willing to go through the action research process on their own in order to improve on their teaching practices. The teachers took the process seriously and created a mini-action plan to follow to help them reach their goals. The implications for our school will be continued improvement both with individual teachers and also with school-wide improvement. The Leadership team has discussed what steps or strategies we need to use for next year so Vaile can continue this improvement process. The team will give teachers more time next year during our professional development time to work on and reflect on their action research plans. We will also give teachers more time to work together on their action research and encourage the teachers to observe in each other's classrooms as part of their action research. The team is also thinking of ways we can individualize our professional development better next year with our learning management system (Canvas). We believe this will help the teachers through this process.

References:

N/A