

The Power of Identifying Schoolwide Effective Practices

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Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:

Through the IPLI process, our staff participated in many surveys identifying the strengths and challenges of our school. We realized that, in terms of the HRS levels, we were low in many areas across the levels. Although our school is very functional, we lacked some key components according to the HRS surveys.

As a team, we decided that we couldn't possibly attack all of our needs at once. So, we picked an area that we felt was going to be most valuable in leading us to further systematic improvement. We decided that identifying a common language among the staff about effective practices was a necessary start. At the time, we lacked a clear understanding of what is expected in our daily instruction.

Therefore, the purpose of our action research was to create a chart indicating the expectations for effective instructional strategies.

Statement of Your Team's Wondering:

How will creating and implementing common effective instructional practices produce outcomes in the classroom?

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insight into our wondering, we worked as an entire staff to develop a chart that identified common instructional practices that indicated what should be happening daily, some days and never. We used professional development time, which is a time that all staff members are present. We worked together to identify individual and team practices that were important to us, ultimately creating a chart that gave direction and clarity for expectations in each classroom.

Data was collected through observations and surveys for approximately five months. During walk throughs, that were conducted weekly, the chart was used to mark what was seen in the classroom. This information was then shared with the whole staff on a shared chart in a common space. We also collected survey data indicating each teacher's individual thoughts about the process and implementation of the chart.

The observation data was used to identify which practices were strengths and which may need to be an area of focus. There were identified daily practices that had not been marked in any of the walk through observations, indicating that more focus needs to be put on this practice. Overall, the observation data collected will help drive possible professional development opportunities. The survey data gave us insight to the validity and value the teachers put in to the chart and the process of creating it. We identified key components of what was shared consistently across the survey responses to help support decisions that will be made as we continue through the process of improving.

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

As a result of analyzing our data, two important things we learned include the areas of focus needed to be addressed in future group, team and individual professional development and that teachers value the clarity of the expectations provided.

Through the quantitative data collected through observations, key components such as student collaboration, higher level questioning, Close Reading, and academic vocabulary were identified as areas needing more implementation. These practices were not observed during walk through observations throughout the process of the data collection.

The qualitative data collected indicated the recurring themes of valuing others' opinions, self evaluation and reflection and the importance of clear expectations. It also identified that teachers felt the student outcomes most directly affected because of the implementation of the chart were more engagement and variety in learning and a more positive learning environment. The survey given to teachers was all written response questions. The above themes were repeated in the teachers' responses most heavily, with an average of ten out of nineteen teachers responding with an answer involving these themes.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

Throughout the action research process, our team learned many things about our staff and our school. The process of creating the chart allowed for open conversation among the staff. It was evident throughout the process that this was uncomfortable for our staff at first, but as the professional conversation became a common part of our meetings, we became better and more comfortable with it. The qualitative data identified that the majority of teachers valued this part of the process and that it added to the buy in of the staff. This chart ultimately was created solely by the staff and the Principal was just a facilitator, which made it much more a product that they created together as a team and was not given to them to implement without input. Overall, the team valued this method and seemed more responsive to the implementation.

Moving forward, the team would like to continue the process by creating a similar chart specific to Math instruction. We also are looking to improve our knowledge and implementation of PLC so we have a platform in which to learn about the practices that each individual and team would like to improve upon. We would like to use the data collected in correlation to our achievement data to guide our school improvement goals.

References:

N/A