Utilizing Collaboration to Impact Instruction

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Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:

Knox Community Middle School had been functioning without a structured PLC/Collaboration process in place for the past several years. The lack of collaboration within the building had created inconsistencies within the instructional process. Therefore, the purpose of our action research was to create a collaboration process that focused on improving the instructional effectiveness within the building.

Statement of Your Team's Wondering:

How can we utilize collaborative teams to increase instructional effectiveness and student achievement?

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into our wonderings, we began to build a collaboration plan. The first step in the plan was to create the time needed to conduct collaboration meetings. This entailed adapting the class schedule to allow common prep times for our teaching teams. We choose to have our staff meet by subject area teams, rather than grade levels, to focus on instruction and content.

The second step of the process was to determine the focus of the collaboration meetings, and a time line for completing the process. The focus was quickly established as the need to create an Instructional Framework to drive our instructional process. The Instructional Framework would be a document outlining: What Should be seen in Classrooms everyday, What Might se seen in Classrooms daily, and What Should Never be seen in Classrooms.

The third step of the process was to document the data as we progressed. This data included Collaboration agendas, graphic organizers created in meetings, and discussion notes from meetings. Upon completion of the Frameworks, the instructional items were transferred to the classroom walk through form, so we could track the implementation. We then began to analyze and share the data to ensure the Instructional Frameworks were being utilized.

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

As a result of analyzing our data, two important things we learned include: 1.Having critical conversations about the instructional process in a collaborative setting allows staff to come to a consistent definition of quality instruction. 2. Utilizing the classroom walk through process to collect data directly related to the instructional framework, allows the administration to follow the implementation and address trouble areas promptly.

Having critical conversations about the instructional process in a collaborative setting allows staff to come to a consistent definitions of quality instruction. Throughout our learning we documented discussion notes from the collaboration meetings, and all groups spent a considerable amount of time discussing the instructional

process in fine detail. These discussions brought real meaning to several key areas of instruction. They defined what it meant for students to "utilize technology in their learning",   they identified productive means of student to student collaboration, and they put definition to what quality student practice is.

Utilizing the classroom walk through process to collect data directly related to the instructional framework, allows for the administration to follow the implementation and address trouble areas promptly. This data piece allowed us to show the teachers that their work was being put into practice. We conducted 108 walk throughs and collected the following: 100/108 teachers demonstrated the Should See Everyday Instructional pieces, 108/108 demonstrated the Might See Everyday Instructional pieces, and 1/108 demonstrated a Should Never See instructional piece. This data was shared at collaboration meetings with staff to show that implementation was up and running, and that areas of concern were being identified and addressed. This data also created a good conversation of how the staff could work with each other on improving trouble areas.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

As we reflect upon the project we dove into, two items emerge as a success. The first is that the Collaboration Process was not seen as " just another meeting" where we throw out some data and move on. The process was embraced by the teachers, because they knew what the expectations were and what the ending outcome would be. The staff was given the voice for input on the instructional framework, and allowed to come to a consensus on what was truly important to learning.

The second is that the creation of the Collaboration Process has created the expectancy of it continuing, and the desire for teachers to continue working together to improve the academic process. This was not the case a few short months ago. There was collective groan from the crowd when I unveiled the plan for Collaboration meetings in August. The tides changed when the process became about the staff, instruction, and mostly about student learning.

References:

N/A