

Working Together to Improve Instruction

By: Daryl Werner, Jac-Cen-Del Jr. Sr. High School

Team Members Names: Ann Bunnell, Kelsey Huber

Contact: dwerner@jaccendel.k12.in.us

Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:

Jac-Cen-Del is a small school that has struggled to develop a collaborative culture and consistent instructional practices. While we had a strong sense that these were issues, the High Reliability Schools Surveys confirmed these issues and encouraged us to take action. Therefore, the purpose of our action research was to develop a dedicated time to PLCs and use this time to collaboratively build a school wide model of instruction and a consistent academic vocabulary.

Statement of Your Team's Wondering:

With this purpose, we wondered how a dedicated collaboration time would help to improve instruction throughout the school.

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into our wondering, we modified our class schedule to accommodate weekly collaboration time and developed two collaboration teams. Each team developed a set of group norms and spent the fall semester discussing best practices in their classrooms. Over time these best practices developed into a school wide model of instruction, which now hangs in every classroom and is used for coaching during walk through observations.

These groups have spent much of the spring semester focused on developing consistent vocabulary for assessments and individual subjects. Teachers have used this as an opportunity to vertically align curriculum goals. This was particularly important given the size of our school and the fact that most of our courses only have one teacher (i.e. one teacher teaches all sections of 7th grade math).

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

As a result of analyzing our data our team learned that a dedicated collaboration time has helped to boost staff morale and created a culture where all teachers feel they can share in the direction of the school. We've also learned that having a consistent assessment vocabulary has helped to increase rigor, especially in non tested subject areas. Further the collaboration time has helped the staff grow closer together and built in a sense of accountability as the staff has raised expectations of each other.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

This action research project has had a significant positive impact on our school. Teachers and students now have clearer expectations on how to increase rigor in the classroom. Additionally, the staff has grown closer together as collaborative conversations are now the norm, during collaboration time and beyond. We are in the process of completing our school wide vocabulary, with the goal of completing it by the end of the year.

The next steps for us is to fully implement the instructional model and vocabulary across the curriculum at the start of next school year. We will also take a closer look at grading practices, connecting standards based feedback to our assessment.

References:

N/A