

Increasing Collaborative Culture through Instructional Rounds Framework

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Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:

Arlington Elementary School is a K-5 school that sits at 5814 S. Arlington Avenue in Indianapolis, IN in Franklin Township. We are one of 7 elementary schools in the Franklin Township Community School Corporation. We currently have approximately 570 students. Our school is made up of 77.2% White, 9.6% Hispanic, 3.9% Multiracial, 3.9% Black, and 5.5% Asian. Arlington Elementary is a Title 1 School. Approximately 57% of the student population qualifies for free or reduced lunch assistance.

The school also offers a magnet program for high ability students with a self-contained classroom in grades 3, 4, and 5. Inclusion special education classrooms are also available. We also offer a self contained special education program referred to as CIP (Comprehensive Intervention Program) for children who qualify. We strive to meet the needs of all learners through our variety of programs and differentiated practice within every classroom.

Our staff is made up on 1 Principal, 1 Counselor, 1 SLP, ½ time School Psychologist, 1 Instructional Coach, 26 Classroom Teachers, 4 Special Area teacher, 3 Special Education Teachers, and 1 ENL Teacher.

Arlington Elementary has a variety of teachers from 30+ years experience to teachers new to the teaching profession. The principal has served at Arlington Elementary for the last 3 years. With the change in staff, pedagogy, and expectations, a common vision was distorted. Teachers defined best practices differently and many teachers often work in silos rather than collaboratively.

Statement of Your Team's Wondering:

Therefore, the purpose of our action research was to define best instructional practices, provide teachers the opportunity to experience those practices, and increase the collaborative culture of our building while actively engaging in a shared vision.

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into our wonderings we met as a staff and determined what should always, often, rarely, and never be observed in a classroom. Once we came to consensus, we were able to put this into a "Look For" document that could be used during Instructional Rounds.

We wanted to design an Instructional Round Framework that fits the unique needs and resources of Arlington Elementary. Arlington Elementary has an instructional coach but due to her numerous duties she is only able to push in to classrooms only 3-4 times per year. Therefore, we wanted to utilize our teacher experts within our building to model different kinds of highly effective instruction. Therefore, we began working with grade level teams. To communicate that this process is a self guided and not evaluative, we decided not to have the coach or the principal go with the team observing to guide the teachers. We met with grade level teachers

before observing and shared the process, norms, and the "Look Fors" form. Teachers were given the task to organize what they wanted to observe and when. Teachers went in pairs to observe. After teachers observed in peers classrooms they shared their findings. The debriefing was very collaborative and strengthened the team. Teachers heard praise from their peers as well as developed their own wonderings. Teachers were encouraged to schedule Instructional Rounds on their own.

An interesting new practice that morphed out of the collaborative work of Instructional Rounds was that my teachers began sharing a document through Google and collaboratively creating digital lesson plans. Instructional Rounds communicated the vision that your grade level teachers and students deserve the best of your entire team. So lesson planning collaboratively is one way students can get the best of all of you.

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

Our school benefited from a School Wide definition of Best Practices and Expectations.

Arlington Elementary increased the collaborative relationships with their peers through Instructional Rounds. Our school increased Grade Level and School wide collaboration and discussion with Shared Digital Lesson Plans.

Teachers completed an online survey after completing their Instructional Rounds. The survey revealed that all teachers would recommend participating in Instructional Rounds. Teachers of various skill levels increased their confidence with Instructional Rounds Framework and Collaborative Digital Lesson Planning. Through Instructional Rounds, teachers increased commitment to best practices and clearly communicated expectations. They have now taken ownership of organizing their own Instructional Rounds based on their needs.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

Arlington Elementary underwent the Action Research process to define our beliefs about classroom culture and practices and implement a framework that allows teachers to experience otherwise inaccessible experts in our building. This process included laying the foundation of this framework by defining best practices, observing other teachers' classrooms and using their ideas to cultivate new ideas, and debriefing/ collaborating with a team after the observation is complete. Arlington Elementary School's Instructional Round Framework has made a marked Impact on our staff. Teachers have been planning together more frequently and utilizing a shared digital lesson plan through google. We will continue this process with the rest of the staff and encourage those who have completed Instructional Rounds work with the Instructional Coach/ Team to complete additional observations.

References:

N/A