

Launching a School-wide Model of Instruction

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Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:

Teachers at JMS are given a lot of autonomy. They are all professional and dedicated and they stay up to date on best practices. With this autonomy, though, it appeared that teachers were becoming less connected. Several of the veteran teachers also believed that the layout of our "new" building played a factor in this increased "isolationism." Teachers did not have the ability to share ideas or to collaborate on lessons. They did not have the opportunity to see what teachers in other departments or grade levels were doing. Results from Marzano's HRS Surveys confirmed the perception of a lack of "school-wide" approach and opportunities to observe, share, and collaborate. Therefore, the purpose of our action research was to find a way to build a school-wide system instead of many classrooms working in isolation.

Statement of Your Team's Wondering:

With this purpose, we wondered if an Instructional Model would help us build towards a common language and a school-wide model of instruction.

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into our wondering, we introduced our staff to the idea of an Instructional Model or Instructional Framework. We based our approach on the examples provided by Marzano's HRS program. We began having small group discussions regarding what should be seen in classrooms everyday, most days, and never. The ideas shared in those conversations were brought back for large group dialogue. A list for each of those categories was created. Departments then reviewed the list to ensure it was applicable to their content areas. Administration took this completed "snapshot" and used it to collect data. They performed walk throughs of over 50 classrooms to see if the items listed in the "Everyday" category were, in fact, being seen. Tally marks were used to collect data. This data collection took place over a two week period. This data was shared with the staff. Discussions were held regarding the data and why some of the items on the snapshot were or were not observed.

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

As a result of analyzing our data, some important things we learned include: 1)Some of the things on the Instructional Model are difficult to see in a walk-through setting. We needed to re-evaluate what types of things belong on the model; 2) It confirmed that we did not have a common language nor did we have common expectations; 3)Common language and common expectations can lead to more focused conversations and more targeted professional development.

As an example of our first learning, one of the items in the "Should See Everyday" category was a "Sense of Belonging." This was not "observed" in a very high percentage of walk-throughs. Even though everyone felt this was an important part of our environment and culture, it was recognized that it as not an observable item

and did not need to be included in the snapshot. It was decided that the expectation could be shared and made part of who we were through other avenues.

Through our conversations while building the snapshot, we realized that we did not share a common language. This could be seen in the use of different terminology for the same instructional technique. It was also seen in different expectations for the same terminology. For example, "student engagement" for some of the teachers meant that the students were quiet and looking at the teacher and it meant something quite different to others.

Having the dialogue regarding common language and common expectations led to the staff exploring ideas for instructional rounds and instructional goals. This has led to a more focused approach for PD going into the next school year.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

Our staff has embraced this idea of building a school-wide language and establishing common expectations. We will begin the new school year revisiting our instructional snapshot. We will have teachers identify areas of weakness on that list and institute instructional rounds to address those areas of weakness. We have learned that by observing others and by having a common language we can stop operating as individual classrooms and begin building a school-wide system of instruction and professional development. This will benefit our teachers and our students.

References:

N/A