

Smith Elementary's Instructional Framework

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Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:

From the beginning of our year at Smith Elementary, we began to discuss our framework for adult/staff expectations. After several staff meetings, it was apparent that we all had professional expectations, but they were all over the board. This dilemma was large enough for us to take a more in depth approach to lining up what we expected from ourselves as professional educators.

Statement of Your Team's Wondering:

With this purpose, we wondered if developing an instructional framework would increase our ability to improve our performance as educators and also that from our students.

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into our wondering, we finalized our instructional framework over the course of 3 different staff meetings (Nov. -Jan.) I guided the way, but realistically, the staff ran with the idea and did a fantastic job. After several meetings, we had a framework of items that were expected from each adult and classroom. The staff narrowed down the items, and we then printed our new expectations for each classroom.

After posters were printed and placed in classrooms, students and visitors started asking about the new "lists" we had in place on all of our doors. My team, Mrs. Race and Mrs. Shanahan, started collecting data through tally marking instructional practices that were documented on our framework posters during our instructional days. Simply stated, if our team observed a practice we marked the practice.

At first, we looked at things as a grade level, but some folks became uncomfortable with only one or two other teachers in that grade level and negative practices had been documented. After that complaint, we agreed that it would be a better practice suited for total tally marks rather than grade level marks to appease those not wanting negative pressure from their colleagues about practices that needed improving.

Our team collected data over the months of January and February. We tally marked three columns of data: 1) Should See Daily 2) Might See 3) Never See

After two full months of data collection, we shared with the staff our observations. Our data included many positives and great educational practices, and it also gave us data to support making small adjustments to our building and that will also help us improve.

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

As a result of analyzing our data, we learned several things. First, we learned that our staff is doing a great job of using professional and current teaching practices. Our positive practices (should see/might see) also improved over the course of the two months that we collected data from 93% to 95%.

Second, we learned that having a common framework with expectations made us more cohesive as a group. Staff started talking about the framework and what they believed they were good at and also what they needed to improve. Teachers started visiting other classrooms searching for ways to improve, and the discussion generated in the building was overwhelming and professional.

Lastly, we learned that we needed a new practice/procedure for students that were left alone. Many of our negative "never see" tally marks were from children left "unattended" that were in the halls taking tests or working on make-up work from absences. As a group, we were able to provide appropriate accommodations and changes to our procedures to eliminate this problem.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

During this process, there were many hurdles/obstacles to overcome. Hurt feelings, negative perceptions, isolation, and "one more thing" to do were some of the largest hurdles we faced. From the beginning, some staff members were cynical because of this project, but honestly, those staff members are cynical with everything that is new or different.

Overall, my team learned that our teachers work very hard to better their practices to improve our school and student population overall. As professional educators, we work very hard to be better than we have been, and we don't like accepting failures. This project was great for us to improve as a staff and know that regardless of how hard we work there is always an opportunity for improvement.

Looking forward, we are excited to begin new projects to improve our building. We have discussed several other things because of this project and wandering. We are thankful for the process and opportunity to improve.

References:

N/A