

Using Videos to Capture our School Wide Instructional Model

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Background That Led to Your Team's Inquiry:

We administered Marzano's Highly Reliable School survey and determined one of the areas our school needs to improve upon is to create an environment that gives teachers the opportunity to interact about effective teaching via technology. We decided this, because this was one of our lowest scores on the Highly Reliable School survey. Furthermore, we decided that our school needed clearer definitions with regards to the instructional models being used in each subject. Therefore, the purpose of our action research was to use technology in a way that clearly defines the instructional expectations in our school.

Statement of Your Team's Wondering:

With this purpose, we wondered "How can we use technology as a means for teachers to interact about effective instruction and learning?"

Methods/Procedures:

To gain insights into our wondering, first we conducted observations daily during the 90 minute reading block. Observations focused on time spent in whole group instruction vs. small group guided reading. Administrators and Instructional coaches did 3 minute walk through observations and focused on the teaching method being used. After analyzing the observations, we pinpointed our instructional focus to define expectations of guided reading. Rather than focusing on the whole reading block we decided to focus on guided reading specifically before, during and after the read.

Next, we wanted to get teachers and administrators on the same page. We asked teachers what they "should see", "could see" and "never see" during the 90 minute reading block. Teachers then put their responses on a chart paper. The results were combined, typed up and given to teachers at a staff meeting.

After communicating expectations, administration and instructional coaches met with small groups of classroom teachers once a week. They reviewed expectations for creating student groups, identifying specific leveled text for each group, facilitating running records and determining a teaching point. After each meeting, teachers were asked to implement their training with students and bring back an accountability sheet that states how many times teachers met with each small group. The sheet also focused on changes in the reading level of students each week. Teachers were expected to bring in a completed running record and explain why they chose a teaching point based off of the running record. This data was collected to determine how professional development should be carried out the following week.

Last, after regularly meetings with teachers, the instructional coaches videotaped teachers demonstrating guided reading. We collected this data to use as an example for future staff and to demonstrate building expectations when leading guided reading with small groups.

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

As a result of analyzing our data two important things we learned are 1.) unless we specifically define teaching expectations, there will be vast inconsistencies across classrooms. 2.) Videos provide a great conversation piece that yields high engagement from our staff.

When we first began our observations each class was using very different teaching methods and some groups were meeting as whole group for up to 30 minutes regularly. Other classrooms had more consistent small group work with the teacher. Clarifying explicit expectations regarding the number of times each group should meet with a teacher and providing feedback to teachers helped get each grade level on consistent expectations.

Having staff video each other provided an opportunity for teachers and the principal to become more confident in their skills. Using teachers at our school provides familiar faces on the videos. New teachers that have questions on particular strategies now have a personal resource in the building they can use to grow in instruction. Last, videotaping the principal's expectations creates a solid, concrete piece of evidence of unchanging expectations for teachers and administrators to use when referring to the instructional model.

Providing Concluding Thoughts:

Our team has learned that our school needs specific guidance and expectations with regards to an instructional model. We learned that getting input from all teachers is a great way to start a shared vision instead of an administrative directive. One critical piece of information that we learned is that teachers may be the last people at school to ask for help. When asking if anyone had questions or did not understand something, teachers were consistently quiet. It was not until we required teachers to demonstrate their understanding that we could truly see how much of the professional development was being demonstrated in the classroom. In the future, our professional development will be followed up with observations to confirm that new practices are being implemented in classrooms.

Moving forward, we plan on using videos more in the future to capture different elements of our instructional model. Our goal is to use different teachers so that most, if not all staff, are included in some aspect of the videotaping. Videotaping brings confidence to the teacher being taped and can be used to highlight excellent teaching strategies and methods. This is a prime instrument in establishing a culture of student achievement. "Culture is the extent to which the leader fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation among staff. The following behaviors associate with a strong culture include promoting cohesion among staff, promoting a sense of well-being among staff, developing an understanding of purpose among staff and developing a shared vision of what school could be like." (Marzano, 2005). Instructional videos highlighting our staff can be used as an instrument in promoting a strong culture of student learning and staff ownership throughout the process.

References:

Marzano, Robert J., et al. School Leadership That Works. ASCS, 2005