



Adjusting Meeting Structures: Improving Reading Achievement And Behavior Through Collaboration



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Introduction

Because of federal legislation, schools are now held accountable for the success of all students regardless of socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, or disability (NCLB, 2001). In addition, federal laws have embraced the main components of reading instruction proposed by the National Reading Panel (1985). Elementary schools are under pressure to ensure all students have basic reading skills by the end of third grade. Many elementary schools have become high achieving through the use of a multi-tiered model of reading instruction (Chard et al. 2008). An essential component of a multi-tiered instructional approach is a shift in the amount of time and focus of meetings among staff members (DuFour, 2004; Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007).

THE GOAL: Improve the efficiency of individual meetings and enhance overall meeting structures by providing focus for existing meetings, eliminating some meetings, and increasing collaboration time for teachers.

School Characteristics

The elementary school has approximately 300 Kindergarten through fifth grade students, which is an average size in the school district that serves approximately 11,000 students. The school has approximately 40% of the students with free or reduced lunch status and receives Title I funding. The school has relatively high mobility rates compared to other schools in the district (approximately 60% mobility rate).

The school has two classes per grade level (Kindergarten has 3 half-day classes). Two special education teachers and one full time Title I reading teacher serve the lowest achieving students in reading.

Assessment Scores

Benchmark Reading Assessments

Risk	Grade	# in Range	# in Grade	%	Desired	Gap
<20 %ile	K	10	45	22%	<5%	17%
<40 %ile	K	20	45	44%	<15%	29%
<20 %ile	1	10	52	19%	<5%	14%
<40 %ile	1	17	52	33%	<15%	18%
<20 %ile	2	11	54	20%	<5%	15%
<40 %ile	2	21	54	39%	<15%	24%
<20 %ile	3	11	48	23%	<5%	18%
<40 %ile	3	18	48	38%	<15%	23%
<20 %ile	4	10	47	21%	<5%	16%
<40 %ile	4	15	47	32%	<15%	17%
<20 %ile	5	13	54	24%	<5%	19%
<40 %ile	5	21	54	39%	<15%	24%

Statewide Assessment

Grade	Performance Level	# in Grade	% in Grade	Desired %	Gap
3	Meets and Exceeds	40	85.10%	>85%	At Desired
3	Nearly Meets	6	12.80%	<10%	2.8%
3	Does Not Meet	1	2.10%	<5%	At Desired
4	Meets and Exceeds	37	77.10%	>85%	7.9%
4	Nearly Meets	3	6.30%	<10%	At Desired
4	Does Not Meet	8	16.70%	<5%	11.7%
5	Meets and Exceeds	33	67.30%	>85%	17.7%
5	Nearly Meets	11	22.40%	<10%	12.4%
5	Does Not Meet	5	10.20%	<5%	5.2%

The formative assessment (reading benchmark) scores indicate that many more students are at-risk for reading difficulties than would be realistic for a multi-tiered instructional approach to succeed. In addition, the scores from the statewide assessments indicate that many students do not meet the state standard, especially in grades 4 and 5. This will most likely lead to many students not meeting in subsequent grades.

Current Model

Current structures are redundant, inefficient, and unfocused

Team	Schedule	Agenda	Desired Outcome
SST	1x week	Process concerns for 2 students per meeting	Assist in developing intervention plans and plan formal evaluations
Site Council	1x month	Set goals for school	Establish school priorities
Staff meetings	2x month	Building logistics	Provide information to staff
Professional Development	3x year	Choice of activity	Develop skills necessary for good instruction
PBS team	Quarterly	Discuss and process discipline data	Maintain logistics necessary for PBS implementation
Data teams	3x year	Discuss and process academic and behavioral data	Review and analyze academic and behavior data and establish school priorities
Literacy Coach	5x year	Specific literacy skill instruction	Develop expertise of 1 teacher with the hopes of disseminating information to rest of staff
Literacy Team	1x month	Discuss and adjust general instruction and interventions. Process individual students.	Instructional practices that meet the needs of >90% of students.

New Meeting Structures



This graphic represents the new meeting structures. The elementary school will have the same number of teams, but the meetings will be more efficient and provide more time for collaboration. The boxes indicate proposed functions of teams. The arrows indicate the flow of students as intervention and progress monitoring efforts are intensified. The boxes overlay the red, yellow and green triangle, which represents a multi-tiered instructional approach to reading and behavior.

Functions

- The PBS and Literacy teams will function as building level teams that address the system level issues.
- The Grade Level teams will meet twice a month:
 - One for core instruction planning and
 - One for planning for students performing below benchmark
- Students who do not make adequate progress will be referred to Individual Student Supports (ISS). This team will meet on an "as needed" basis to develop intervention and progress monitoring plans.
- An evaluation planning team will meet if a special education evaluation becomes necessary.

Specifics and Timelines

Anticipated modifications to the district calendar and adjustments to the school schedule are necessary for the proposed changes to the meeting structures in the elementary school. The new schedule will be implemented **Fall 2009**.

Team	Schedule	Agenda	Desired Outcome
Grade-Level Teams	1x month	Discuss and adjust general curriculum and instruction	Instructional practices in the general education that meets the needs of >80% of students
Grade-Level Teams with RTI team	1x month	Discuss and adjust interventions for lowest 20% of students	Instructional practices in general and supplemental instruction that meets the needs of >95% of students.
ISS	As Needed	Process concerns for students who need additional supports	Assist in developing intervention plans and schedule progress monitoring
PBS team	Quarterly	Discuss and process discipline data	Maintain logistics necessary for PBS implementation
Literacy team	Quarterly	Discuss and process academic and behavioral data	Review and analyze academic and behavior data and establish school priorities
Additional collaboration	2x month (early release)	Discuss and process academic and behavioral data	Instructional practices in the general education that meets the needs of >80% of students
Professional Development	3x year	Half-day collaboration, half-day training from building staff	Develop skills necessary for good instruction
Staff meetings	Max 3x year	Building logistics	Information to staff

Where is the "more" time?

The plan does not include increased funding nor increased release time, therefore, more time for collaboration will come from:

- Early release days two times a month
- Elimination of Staff Meetings
- Elimination of Site-Council
- Conversion of regularly scheduled SST into "as needed" scheduled ISS
- Improved meeting focus provided by standard agendas and forms
- Staff development days provided at school building
- Grade-level team meetings with clear focus on student achievement
- Better instruction for all means less students in the at-risk range that must be processed at separate meetings

Anticipated Impacts

The shift in meeting structures will impact teachers:

1. The focus of meetings will have increased focus on student achievement and instructional practices.
2. Less meeting time will be spent on logistics.
3. The onus of staff development will be on colleagues, not individual "experts" from outside of the school
4. Increased ownership of all students and their achievement.
5. Collaborative time will be valued and used wisely with a focus on existing data.

The shift in meeting structures will impact student achievement:

1. >80% of total students will score at or above the benchmark according to formative reading assessments, with a substantial focus on the early skills in grades K-2.
2. <5% of total students will score below the 20%ile according to formative reading assessments.
3. >85% of students will meet the statewide benchmark in grades 3-5.

Continue Current Model and/or Alternatives?

The **Current Model**:

- Does not allow an appropriate amount of collaboration time according to PLC and multi-tiered instructional models (RTI approaches).
- The coaching component is inadequate according to these models, which does not allow for transfer of knowledge into practice (Joyce & Showers, 2002).
- With the SST structure, the team is unable to process an adequate number of students to meet the intervention needs of the lowest 20% of students. If issues and concerns are discussed and interventions planned for 2 students per week during the 36 school weeks, the SST can cover 72 students per year. According to the formative reading assessments, approximately 144 students are at risk of reading failure.
- The new model will require processing less individual students, with a focus on instructional planning for larger groups.

Alternative Model: Increased Coaching

- Instead of focusing on more collaboration time, the elementary school could increase the amount of money and resources devoted to coaching.
- Currently, this is not fiscally realistic. With budget constraints, human resources will be diminished.
- A combined approach that increases staff development for selected staff members and increases collaboration time is fiscally more realistic.
- The new model will allow for "in-building" experts to develop the expertise of the whole staff.

Resources

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