**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 law has 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**
Benchmarks Reading Assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Benchmark</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
<th>% of Grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 triangles, which represents a multi-tiered instructional approach to reading and behavior.

**Current Model**
Current structures are redundant, inefficient, and unfocused

**Current Model**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Schedule</th>
<th>Agenda</th>
<th>Desired Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SST</td>
<td>3x week</td>
<td>Prepare for 2 students per week for IEP meetings.</td>
<td>Meet monthly to discuss and plan core instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site Council</td>
<td>1x week</td>
<td>Site based professional development</td>
<td>Meet monthly to discuss and plan core instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Meetings</td>
<td>2x week</td>
<td>Building level meetings</td>
<td>Meet monthly to discuss and plan core instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum Development</td>
<td>3x year</td>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>Meet monthly to discuss and plan core instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Team</td>
<td>4x year</td>
<td>Collect and process data</td>
<td>Meet monthly to discuss and plan core instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Coach</td>
<td>4x year</td>
<td>Conduct specific reading and behavior data</td>
<td>Meet monthly to discuss and plan core instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Team</td>
<td>6x year</td>
<td>Analyze data and behavior data</td>
<td>Meet monthly to discuss and plan core instruction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**New Meeting Structures**

- **Evacuation Team**
  - In-building experts to respond to crisis
  - Develop skills necessary for good crisis management
  - Meet bi-weekly to coordinate training and drill
  - Meet monthly to coordinate drill and drill

- **SST Teams**
  - In building experts
  - Meet 1-2 times per month (30 minutes)
  - Discuss and plan core instruction
  - Collaborate with the building behavior and academic teams

- **PBIS Team**
  - Quarterly
  - Discuss and process discipline issues
  - Meet monthly to discuss and plan core instruction
  - Meet weekly to discuss and plan core instruction

- **SST Team**
  - Quarterly
  - Discuss and process academic and behavior data
  - Meet monthly to discuss and plan core instruction
  - Meet weekly to discuss and plan core instruction

- **ISS Team**
  - Quarterly
  - Discuss and process academic and behavior data
  - Meet monthly to discuss and plan core instruction
  - Meet weekly to discuss and plan core instruction

- **Literacy Team**
  - In building experts
  - Meet 1-2 times per month (30 minutes)
  - Discuss and plan core instruction
  - Collaborate with the building behavior and academic teams

- **Special Education**
  - In building experts
  - Meet 1-2 times per month (30 minutes)
  - Discuss and plan core instruction
  - Collaborate with the building behavior and academic teams

**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.

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

**The shift in meeting structures will impact student achievement:**
- 90% 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.
- 95% of total students will score at or above the benchmark according to formative reading assessments.
- 95% of students will meet the statewide benchmark in grades 3-5.

**Continue Continue Current Model and/or Alternatives?**

- 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**