

GOOD NEWS FROM MIDDLE SCHOOL



The Middle School is winding up a successful 1st semester. While there are many things our teachers and students have done throughout the month that are all newsworthy, we would like to focus this newsletter on student learning data and professional development.

Our Lead Team meets each semester to determine the effects of interventions that are offered to our struggling learners.

While we are not finished with this work, our initial findings are positive. During 1st semester, 913 homework interventions were implemented with only our at-risk para and 2 certified staff who were given designated time during DEAR for this purpose. We are thrilled with this number as we have less than half the staff available for this service during DEAR time as we did last year but were able to maintain about the same number of interventions (both years were around 910).

We are also able to offer 44 minutes of instruction every other day for students who struggle in reading and math. Data from the MAP (Measures of Academic Progress) indicate that our intervention students are making expected growth in reading. Our students are averaging 2.9 RIT points growth in reading compared to the expected growth of 2.3. Six of our 39 reading intervention students met expectations in all measures (MAP, fluency, progress monitoring) and are now being exited from that intervention. These measures also indicate 82% of our students are responding to interventions.

Math interventions have also been successful with 71% of students responding to intervention. MAP data indicates that students have grown an average of 4.4 RIT points compared to the expected growth of 3.5. Three of these students will now be exited due to meeting expectations in all measures (MAP, pretest/posttest scores, and progress monitoring).

Math will also be adding another layer of intervention for students who continue to struggle. As part of this tier, SOAR math intervention will be implemented 2nd semester.

Overall, we are pleased with the implementation of these interventions and the dedication of our staff to help struggling learners!

Professional development at the Middle School has focused on the materials selected by our Administrative Team: *Best Practice* and *The Highly Engaged Classroom*. Teachers were surveyed for interest in topics found in the *Best Practice* book and groups were developed from there, with a focus on engagement. Groups included: using unusual information, games, controversy, and questioning strategies. Teachers have completed their first cycle of collaborative research and development in those small learning groups using a simple questioning protocol to guide discussion, implemented in classrooms, and have shared out with the rest of staff by using a fishbowl protocol.

Our next round of PD will continue with the same model and still focus on topics teachers selected in the survey at the beginning of the year. Topics will change to: The Responsible Student - more responsibility transferred to students for their work: goal setting, record keeping, monitoring, sharing, exhibiting, and evaluating; Getting Higher - more emphasis on higher-order thinking, on learning a field's key concepts and principles; Active Hands - more experiential, hands-on learning; Together is Better - more cooperative, collaborative activity; developing the classroom as an interdependent community; and Structured Chaos - more active learning, with all the attendant noise and movement of students doing and talking. These topics will be used for the remainder of the year with teachers being able to complete a cycle of research and development in 2 of these areas. We look forward to working and learning together to expand our instructional toolboxes!