

Gettysburg Elementary Model Programs and Practices

School Information

CDS (County District School) Code: 10621176106660

County: Fresno

District (Local Educational Agency): Clovis Unified

School: Gettysburg Elementary

Demographics

Enrollment: 690 students

Location Description: Suburban

Title I Funded: No

School Calendar: Traditional

Charter: No

Overview

Gettysburg Elementary was established in 1986 and currently has 690 students enrolled in grades TK–6. Gettysburg embraces the cultural diversity of our student population. Our students, staff and community have accepted the district's challenge to "Be the best you can be in mind, body, and spirit," which is reflected in our school's vision of preparing students to be productive citizens and lifelong learners. Our students and staff have established a prominent presence in our community as a source of pride, enthusiasm and achievement. A tremendous investment of time and energy by our administration, teachers and staff is reflected in ongoing collaborative work with parents and members of our Gettysburg community. Gettysburg has won numerous awards which include: CA Distinguished School, National Blue Ribbon School, Business and Education Excellence Award, and most recently, Gold Ribbon School.

Teachers differentiate instruction, regrouping within grade levels, to better personalize the learning experience. Student achievement is frequently assessed in reading, language arts, writing, and math through a formative assessment system utilizing technology to produce immediate reports and disaggregated information. Teachers use

results of frequent assessments to reteach and accelerate skill development for all students.

Proactive leadership, data-driven decision-making and an emphasis upon continuous improvement empower us to accomplish our mission and achieve our goals. Leadership supports and promotes innovation in our school programs. Grade levels meet weekly to share student work samples, analyze academic progress and discuss effective instructional strategies.

Guided by our academic successes, we have a solid focus on accountability for student learning and performance and have infused the California Standards into our curriculum. Our educational team works diligently to ensure that each student is given the best possible opportunity for success. We have a committed teaching staff that is clearly focused on learning that encompasses critical ongoing assessment and reflection on disaggregated evidence of academic achievement.

We are committed to making Gettysburg a school that prepares students to succeed in the real world. To do so, the staff at Gettysburg will:

- Provide a safe and positive learning environment for all students
- Individualize instruction to meet the needs of every student
- Believe that every child can learn and we can teach every child
- Create a culture of respect
- Encourage responsibility

Model Program and Practices

Name of Model Program/Practice: Building Coherence for Instructional Improvement (BCII)

Length of Model Program/Practice: 2–4 years

Target Area(s): Education Supports, Professional Development

Target Population(s): American Indian, Asian, Black or African American, Filipino, Hispanic, Pacific Islander, White, Two or More Races, Socioeconomically Disadvantaged, English Learners, Students with Disabilities

Strategies Used: Small Learning Communities, Professional Development

Description

According to John Hattie's research on effective classroom practices, Collective Teacher Efficacy is one of the most impactful strategies for student learning (1.57 effect size). Collective teacher efficacy refers to a staff's shared belief that through their collective action, they can positively influence student achievement. Hearing this data,

the Gettysburg Elementary Staff decided to research how Collective Teacher Efficacy could best be utilized on the Gettysburg campus. Their research led them to a training through the Welty Center at California State University Fresno called Building Coherence for Instructional Improvement (BCII). Under the guidance of Dr. Ginny Boris, Gettysburg Elementary began a three year training to incorporate BCII on their campus. BCII has four goals:

1. Unite a school faculty with a common instructional improvement focus across grade levels
2. Provide a forum for building coherence around a school-wide improvement effort
3. Ensure a lasting school-wide implementation of high leverage instructional practices
4. Empower teachers to work together and make decisions about improvements in teaching & learning that raise student mastery.

After several meetings and discussions, Gettysburg's initial work was to collectively decide upon an instructional area of focus. The staff reviewed 2015 SBAC scores and noticed that Gettysburg did not perform well in Claims 2 & 4 (problem solving) in math. The staff agreed to focus on math problem solving, which began in September 2015. The staff's multiple year journey to implement BCII began. BCII guided Gettysburg's discussion to focus on the following essential components:

1. Identification of the Instructional Focus

Goal: Faculty routinely adopts and fully pursues a school-wide instructional focus as an improvement strategy

2. Development of short cycle assessments

Goal: Short cycle systems are in place to drive improved teaching and learning across the school

3. Professional Learning on the Instructional Focus

Goal: The faculty capacity in the Instructional Focus continuously improves

4. Assessing Current Practice

Goal: The BCII Team conducts current practice protocols to update shared understanding of the implementation of the Instructional Focus

5. Identification of Problem of Practice

Goal: The faculty routinely identifies, explores and overcomes problems of practice through PLC discussions and peer observation

Implementation and Monitoring

The initial implementation goal was to research best practices pertaining to math problem solving, adopt those best practices and teach them to our students to ensure academic success.

Led by the BCII Team (one teacher per grade level), the staff determined that there was not a single "program" that fit the needs of the school, so they decided to create their own list of high leverage strategies. The final product was a document that they have called "Gettysburg Math Problem Solving Best Practices". This guiding document breaks down strategies that should occur before instruction, during instruction, and after instruction. These strategies were formatted on a poster, so that all classrooms could start modeling/teaching problem solving expectations. During this time, the BCII team went to several all-day conferences and would synthesize the information learned to share with the staff. The BCII team was always responsible for determining next steps and presenting the information at Staff Meetings. Soon Staff Meetings changed from talking about business, to teacher-leaders creating collaborative conversations that led to instructional improvement.

The BCII Team, with input from the staff, began to create a system that embedded the practices from BCII into the culture of Gettysburg. After some trial and error, a semester long system was created to focus on one strategy at a time from "Gettysburg Math Problem Solving Best Practices" (called problem of practice):

1. Staff activity to determine problem of practice (i.e. productive struggle or justification)
2. Staff researches best practices at PLC and shares at staff meeting
3. Staff takes research and creates common formative assessment (with special attention to the problem of practice)
4. Teachers give assessment to class (to analyze data)
5. Findings from the assessment are shared at grade-level PLCs
6. Each PLC asked to share their problem of practice findings at a staff meeting
7. Staff analyzes all of the findings with the goal of creating a common list of best practices
8. Using the new best practices, grade levels again asked to create a common formative assessment for Student Thinking Day.
9. Teachers observe each other's problem solving lesson (called "Student Thinking Day)

- Administration provides substitute teachers so that half of the staff can observe the other half
- Observing teachers debrief prior to their observations to ensure a clarity of the task at-hand and a common focus on the problem of practice
- Observing teachers observe 4 different teachers and write down their observations of student thinking in regards to the problem of practice
- Observing teachers meet and compile all of their data
- All staff meet in an after school meeting to share findings with the ultimate goal of determining next steps.

10. The entire cycle is started again once a new semester begins with a new focus on a different problem of practice.

Results and Outcomes

The academic gains due to Gettysburg's capacity to engage in deliberate improvements in instructional practice has been significant. Since 2015, the percent of students who have "mastered" the SBAC math assessment has increased by 14% (from 45% to 59%). The percent "above standard" on math claims 2 & 4 has increased 16.5% (from 16.5% to 33%). The qualitative data has been equally impressive. An informal survey at the beginning of each school year found that teachers were impressed at the math problem solving strategies students were demonstrating at the beginning of the year.

In addition to student proficiency, the Gettysburg Staff has gained great pride in creating a math problem solving system from scratch. The collaboration to successfully implement such a task required a tremendous amount of research and teamwork. Through this process, the skill level of every teacher involved improved. Instead of hiring outside experts to train the staff, the Gettysburg Staff has created a Staff Development system to observe and collaborate with each other to gain the necessary skills to teach math problem solving.

One of the more valuable outcomes of BCII is our Student Thinking Day. Gettysburg's Student Thinking Day is the culminating event to the semester-long focus on a problem of practice. The results from this day have been monumental in creating instructional improvements. One Gettysburg teacher stated, "I have worked at this school for 25 years, and I've never observed another classroom or had another colleague observe me."

Gettysburg Elementary has truly adopted John Hattie's research that Collective Teacher Efficacy results in tremendous academic gains. The Gettysburg staff has a shared belief and made collective actions to positively influence student achievement. Maybe the most telling observation from the Building Coherence for Instructional Improvement

(BCII) training is that the staff no longer uses the term "BCII" in their conversation; it's simply now referred as, "Gettysburg's Math Problem Solving"