

Meeting Minutes June 30

Present: Joe Boggio, Janet Heikkila, Ann Freitag, Inder Khalsa, Mary Ellen Shippee, Lynne Edwards, Irene Hall, Geordie Harrison-Heller, Diana Sommer, Tom Talbot

Janet reviewed the process for the day noting that we are on a compressed timeline.

The overall root cause analysis (RCA) process started with the use of an online tool offered as a pilot program by the NH DOE. Each of a list of 82 indicators of school success was reviewed by the team and a brief discussion of each ensued. Once the team felt it had sufficient background knowledge a brainstorming session took place to develop hypotheses for the achievement gap in mathematics at the middle school. The group identified 34 items in the brainstorming session. Next time was spent clarifying and questioning what each of the 34 items meant so as to create a better understanding of each item. Each team member then advocated for three of the items on the list, explaining why they felt it was important. At that point our facilitator led us through a system to tally what the group identified as most important. From that session seven questions or hypotheses were developed. A brief explanation of each of these priorities is provided below.

1. Is there a lack of tutoring and individual instruction for these students? The team questioned the ability of all students to learn in a group instruction model. The general feeling was that there are individual students who need the one on one time that could only be provided by a tutor due to the size of the classes in the middle school.
2. What are the individual learning goals for each student? The team questioned whether or not students had a clear understanding of what they were learning, why they were learning it, how learning was relevant to them, whether or not they had a goal, and the teaching staff felt identifying weaknesses that individual students demonstrated and driving instruction from that information would be beneficial.
3. Why don't we test three times each year, fall, winter and spring? In order to make the best decisions on instruction the group felt it important to deliver NWEA test three times a year as opposed to our current year when we tested in the spring. The assessment data could be used to regroup students and provide more information about strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum
4. Why aren't we using the data we already have efficiently? Staff members on the team felt they had not had sufficient training to access and understand the data. Additionally, with all of the other roles teachers must work on time is another contributing factor to the inefficiency.
5. Why don't we do more with pre-tests to better inform instruction? The amount of time required to create pre-tests seemed to be problematic. Also, being able to effectively implement a classroom lesson based on information from the pre-test was identified as a problem due to lack of resources, including personnel. Ongoing staff development in differentiated instruction was identified as a roadblock to successfully implementing pre-tests.
6. How much home support are our students really getting? A student survey indicated that parents were available to help them with their homework, however, a significant number of students also indicated that their parents only sometimes or never knew how to help them with the work.

Although an online homework help tool is available it does not appear that students and parents are accessing it for help.

7. How can we better monitor and evaluate interventions that are in place? The middle school already has a number of initiatives in place to improve math performance. The monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of these initiatives needs to be accomplished efficiently and with integrity to use of actual data.

The action plan for item 2 above was started.

The following list of action items was identified.

Plan for communicating with students in a fun and meaningful way what their individual learning goals mean. (Irene, Geordie, Lynne)

Plan for communicating learning goals to parents. (Ann and Inder)

Discussion whether the above is done with all students or identified students set for next meeting's agenda.

Determine what our AYP benchmarks were and are. (Joe)

Professional Development (PD) ideas and needs. (Tom)

What are we currently doing with PD? (Ann)

Current initiatives at middle school level emailed to team. (Joe)

Not discussed but requested. Review school improvement document dated 7_09_09 embedded within this email and review agenda.