Challenge

• Low reading scores were a countywide issue.
• Many secondary students came into high school as struggling readers.
• Secondary educators had few strategies to reach struggling readers.
• Students were unable to apply what they learned in reading intervention classes into content areas.

Solution

DURING 2018-19 SY (YEAR 1)

• Integrated job-embedded professional learning at South Hagerstown High School through Reading Apprenticeship (RA) Framework:
  • South High is the most urban school in Washington County and has the highest percentage of students living in poverty.
  • Implemented core content-specific professional learning through RA teacher institutes.
  • The pilot group included 60 students.
    • 30% of the student in the pilot group were special education (SWD) students.
    • 40% of the students in the pilot group were minority students.
  • Students were assigned to a reading intervention class. Teachers of English, science, social studies, and a reading interventionist also engaged in collaborative RA professional learning.

• Those core classes also included students who were not part of the intervention class. This design enabled students not in the pilot group also to benefit from high-quality professional learning focused on social, personal, cognitive, and knowledge-building skills.

• In monthly follow-up professional learning, teachers used Leading for Literacy protocols to look at student work and discuss strategies; a WestEd RA coach was brought in to support teachers with classroom visits and collaborative planning; teachers attended RA follow-up professional learning.

DURING 2019-20 SY (YEAR 2)

• Expanded to 3 middle and 3 high schools:
  • 128 students identified for intervention; again, the design was a deliberate spread to more than just intervention classes.
  • The district created literacy lead teacher positions for the 4 teachers at South High. These teachers opened their classroom for observations from other teachers.
  • Monthly team meetings are held at all schools implementing RA in Year 2.
  • Implemented a book study for Reading for Understanding with 22 participants from 9 middle and high schools encompassing a variety of grades and contents.

Contact:

Jodi Smith
Washington County Public Schools
smithjod@wcps.k12.md.us
301-766-8703
Impact

• Growth was observed in all subgroups of students.

• Three additional middle schools began RA intervention class (Western Heights, E.R. Hicks, and Springfield Middle Schools).

• Kids were using RA.

• Teachers shared anecdotal notes indicating increased student engagement and participation.

• Changes in teacher practice included:
  • Improved progress monitoring/tracking of student data.
  • Increased involvement in professional development.
  • Increased interest in collaboration among content area teachers.
  • More time for independent reading and student-led discussion.
  • Increased disciplinary literacy instruction in all content areas.
  • Awareness of student difficulties and willingness to provide supports.

• District continued to:
  • Provide a stipend for literacy lead teachers.
  • Create opportunities for peer observation.
  • Build intervention classrooms that enhance reading.
  • Provide resources to classrooms to support instruction.

Washington County Public Schools Reading Apprenticeship growth
December 2019

To students:
In which classes are the RA strategies most helpful?
42 responses

To students:
Do you use RA strategies in classes even when the teacher doesn’t make you?
42 responses