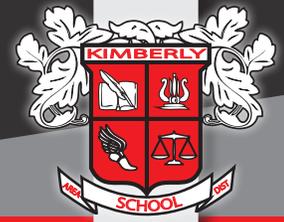


School Matters



Special Insert
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School News for Residents of the Kimberly Area School District



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Superintendent

In this special insert edition, learn about how we are implementing continuous improvement (Lean) to help our students. We now have two model buildings fully engaged in continuous improvement - Mapleview and Woodland Intermediate Schools. Our staff has presented nationally on their continuous improvement work (congrats to the Mapleview staff) and are having articles published on the topic (kudos to the Janssen team and authors Holly Prast and Amy Betters-Midtvedt). Continuous improvement itself doesn't solve problems, rather, it is changing our culture and empowering staff to recognize opportunities for improvement. The future of continuous improvement in our District is a world where it enhances our culture of giving students what they need, when they need it.

-- Bob Mayfield

Making a Difference Every Day

At recent Kimberly Area School District Board of Education meetings, the third grade team at Janssen Elementary School and Woodland Intermediate School shared their continuous improvement journeys. Both schools are seeing positive gains in student achievement due to their efforts.

It Started With a Question

Led by Hercules Nikolaou, principal of Janssen Elementary School, the third grade teachers were tasked with improving student mastery in math. Dr. Nikolaou explained that it started with a question, "How can I see at a glance what your current condition is for every student in the classroom and know who is not meeting proficiency in the mastery targets?"

The team was given a few parameters and the flexibility to create a process that worked for them:

- Meet daily
- Have passion and perseverance
- Problem solve

The team was empowered to adjust what they were doing every day to achieve results. Prior to this project, the teacher's practice was to save up or batch their discussion topics on individual student's needs for a weekly meeting. They found this batching meant they had an ever growing list of items to talk about each week resulting in a longer meeting.

Meeting Daily

The teachers found time each day for a short meeting to brainstorm solutions for student's needs in a timely manner. "Meeting every day has allowed me to make sure that I am aware of how each child in my classroom is performing on each standard we work on," said Sam Pinchart, a teacher on the third grade team. "I find that I am better able to see gaps in my instruction and in their learning, which then allows me to plan my teaching in order to close those gaps for my students."

Using Data to Make Decisions

"The data allowed us to look at a particular mastery target and recognize an area that a student may need help on that we may not have noticed before by just looking at their overall progress," said third grade teacher, Kayla Hendricks. Not only did this process help students learn, it also helped the teachers teach. By collaborating daily they could share what they were doing to help students and try different techniques learned from their colleagues in their own classrooms. "Our conversations became more powerful," said Pinchart.



Third grade teachers Samantha Pinchart, Joann Kayser, Kayla Hendricks and Chad Wilczek discuss their work with Hercules Nikolaou, principal of Janssen Elementary School.

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Seeing Results

Math proficiency levels among third grade students at Janssen increased significantly in all targets this school year compared to last year. One example was a 33% proficiency level that jumped to 77% year over year. “I am so proud of these awesome people,” stated Nikolaou.

Pursuing a Goal to Improve

Woodland Intermediate School started the school year with a specific goal - to achieve a 10% reduction of students at-risk of not meeting grade level expectations. Additionally, the sixth grade math team set a school-wide target to have 80% of students at or above grade level.

“Our students have historically done really well and we’ve met the State’s criteria of ‘Significantly Exceeds Expectations’ for the last several years,” said Dave Lamers, principal of Woodland Intermediate School. “But what is challenging is that there are also students who are not meeting those grade level expectations.”

Problem Solving

They began by using the District’s continuous improvement problem solving model. By studying the gap in where students were and where they should be, they identified a small group of students who were not meeting grade level expectations.

Their analysis led them to believe there was poor retention due to lack of mastery from current years or gaps in the curriculum. “We used an online intervention tool, and then used the basics of re-teaching, small grouping and working with those students to help get them to grade level,” said sixth grade teacher Lindsey Heinz.

The sixth grade team monitored student’s progress and checked in at regular intervals. After seeing success with the small group, they expanded the continuous improvement work to include more students.

Involving Students

Making goals visual for the students also helped to engage them in their own learning. Students track their pre-test and post-test scores. If they have room for improvement, they are asked to pursue additional activities that will help them improve and also track those activities visually in their classroom.

“One of the best things that we’ve taken away from this process has been listening to what the kids want for motivation and what they like for rewards,” said Heinz. “The process where they give us feedback versus us telling them what to do has been really good.”

Visual Management

In the past, the team would collaborate and collect results for a unit and move on to the next unit. Now, they look at how each student is doing every day on each concept within a unit, and can intervene immediately if needed.

Each student is represented with a magnet on a wall. “One of the biggest changes with our behavior is our visual management,” said Paula Hintz, fifth grade teacher. “When we move a magnet, we know those kids and how they’re doing on each and every standard of that unit. We don’t like to see kids that aren’t meeting that standard.”

The teachers use their collaborative tools and problem solving strategies to help students. “We look at it not as my class or their class, but as the entire fifth grade team’s math class,” said Hintz.



The fifth grade teachers at Woodland Intermediate School use a magnet to visually track each student’s understanding of math concepts.

Celebrating Success

“We have a lot to celebrate with the work that is being done,” said Lamers. Their goal was to reduce the number of students considered at-risk of not meeting grade level expectations in reading or math by 10% (20 students). Through the focused work of students and staff, they greatly exceeded their goal by having 90 students (44%) no longer considered at-risk of not meeting grade level expectations.

Continuous Improvement Concepts Lead to Success

- Set specific goals
- Track data visually
- Teachers meet daily
- Discuss each student’s progress
- Collaborate on problem solving
- Involve students in the process

The Future

With continuous improvement pilots taking place in all District schools, staff is always sharing and inviting visitors to see their progress. While each school community is unique, there are consistent concepts from their continuous improvement work that is beneficial to other Kimberly educators.