

Middle School and High School Interventions

Secondary teachers and administrators have identified the need for more students to be successful in class, to improve their literacy, and therefore to graduate from high school prepared for their choice of college and/or careers. They have been examining the question, what happens in our school when, despite our best efforts in the classroom, a student does not learn? Traditionally the response to that question has been left to the discretion of the individual teacher, leading to a disjointed and less effective response to student failure and to teachers being stretched to their limits. Through our review of research, we have found some commonalities within the most successful schools. In particular, Dr. Rick DuFour's work at Adlai Stevenson has been an inspiration to the design of our programs.

If we are truly committed to helping all students learn at high levels, we should provide a multilayered collective response that guarantees all students who struggle will receive additional time and support for learning. The level of student learning can't be the variable anymore. The length of time devoted to intensive instruction and the quality of instruction/support have to be the variables. In response to the buildings' requests, we have implemented a plan in which learning is monitored and timely, directive, systematic interventions are implemented.

If we are going to help our students learn at higher levels, we need to do things differently. We can provide effective interventions by enlisting the help of intervention teachers at the secondary level.

Intervention plan

At the middle school level, each building was able to add the equivalent of a math and English/reading teacher to serve as the intervention teachers. This is a total of 6 special intervention teachers for the 3 middle school buildings. Students are identified by classroom teachers, guidance counselors, and administrators through the examination of classroom formative and summative assessments, previous state assessment data and school success. The identified students are those who need *intensive interventions in math, English, or literacy skills*. The middle school intervention teachers assess the students to identify specific areas of deficient skills. They instruct students in these specific areas and on specific class objectives. The intervention teachers are required to develop curriculum and instructional strategies to address

those specific deficiencies. This intensive instruction is seen as an urgent need for these students so they are prepared to be successful as they progress through middle and high school. Because this position requires both the content knowledge and the pedagogy skills of a teacher as well as specialized certification/training in reading, a certified teacher serves as the interventionists at the middle school level.

At the high school level, the buildings have identified the need for intervention teachers also. Each of the two large high schools was able to add the equivalent of 3 interventionists for a total of 6 at the high school level. When the classroom teacher determines that a student is struggling with a specific topic and needs additional time, beyond that which can be provided in the classroom to learn the curriculum standard being taught, the student may be assigned for a single period to a supervised academic lab/tutorial for basic help or tutoring from an interventionist or a regular classroom teacher. The interventionists are skilled in English Language Arts, Math, or Literacy. They work collaboratively with the classroom teachers to provide additional support for the student to gain the skills needed to be successful in the classroom.

A student who continues to have difficulty on additional course standards is assigned to a mandatory longer term academic lab/tutorial for more specific practice in the identified areas of deficiency. The course teachers instruct the students during the academic lab/tutorial or provide the intervention teacher with information about the student's difficulties so they may work with the students individually or in small groups to meet the standards. Progress is monitored weekly with regular communication between the intervention teachers and the classroom teacher occurring during the Professional Learning Community Team time. If a student continues to have great difficulty in a subject area or a more complex difficulty is determined, the student may be assigned to a semester long program/course that deals more intensely with the specific weakness. The interventionists supervise student progress through the administration and interpretation of assessments.

Measuring the success of both the middle school and high school intervention program is based on the improvement in GPA of the identified students, the rate of student failure, the number of academic and behavioral referrals, ISTEP/ECA scores, NWEA/Acuity scores and graduation rates.