

# Promising Practice

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# We faced this challenge:

- Background:
  - Teachers were not empowered to actively participate in improvement initiatives
  - Little communication among faculty and staff
  - Low morale (outdated building, lack of practice fields, small lunchroom)
  - High student achievement expectations but small gains in results
  - Lack of focus and shared vision
  - Combined faculty and students from two schools as a result of redistricting
- SMART Goal: To improve 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade CRCT achievement in reading
- Challenge:
  - Unify two school cultures into one
  - Have every faculty and staff member “on board” with new strategies
- What we implemented: An enrichment program that focused on reading and writing skills



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# Our analysis that helped us define the problem:

- **Data analyzed:**
  - CRCT scores
  - Middle Grades Writing Assessment
  - SACS Accreditation Review
  - Teachers' perception of student learning discussed in weekly meetings
- **Causes identified:**
  - Data was not easily accessible (The school lacked technology and methods to analyze data efficiently and accurately)
  - The school lacked performance-based programs that focused on the needs of students

# The result of this analysis told us these systems had to change:

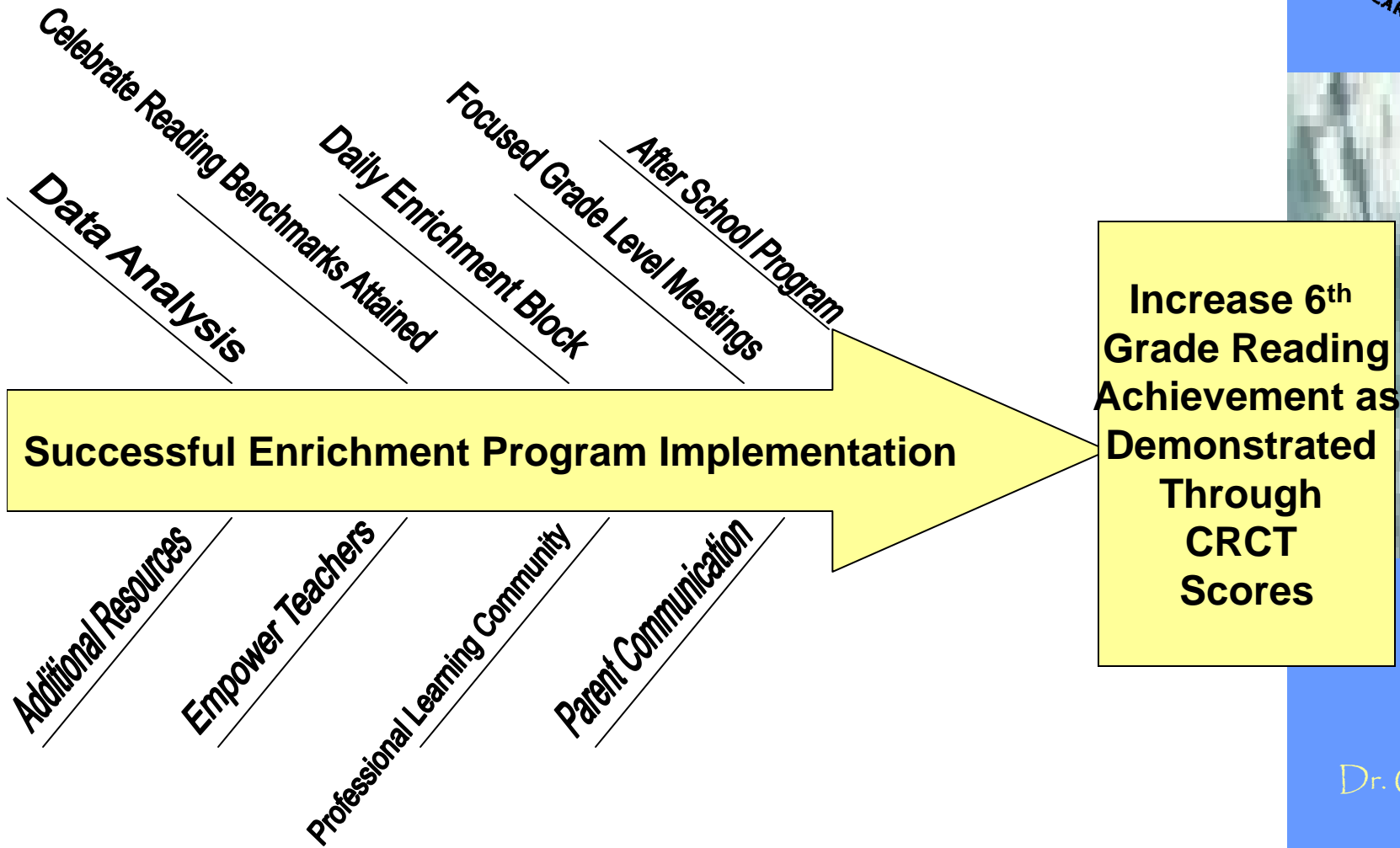
- People (collaboration and training)
- Operations (planning and scheduling)
- Instruction (strategies and accountability)



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# As part of our root cause analysis...our Fishbone Diagram looked like this:



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# We took these actions and performed this work:

- **Development of an Enrichment Program**
  - Implemented an enrichment block (45 minutes of focused instruction on reading and writing)
  - Used accelerated reader to encourage reading during breakfast and lunch
  - Implemented after-school writing workshops (students work one-on-one with language arts teachers)
  - Revived their school literature magazine
  - Started student book clubs
  - Provided feedback to students on writing and reading progress every 4.5 weeks
- **Professional Learning**
  - Parents: SOAR night (Sharing Our Academic Resources) allowed parents to learn to use the computer and internet
  - Teachers:
    - Provided structured opportunities for teachers to observe and learn from each other's instructional strategies.
    - Training in Reading/Language Arts Instruction: Reading/ELA teachers taught other faculty to incorporate writing and reading instruction in their classes (e.g. Science teacher requires students to give complete sentences on all assignments.)
- **Motivation/Affirmation: The principal offered a challenge for a challenge:**
  - Agreed to run 1 mile per set amount of books read (ran 10 miles altogether!)
  - Agreed to sit on the roof and dodge water balloons for the entire day if the students met their Accelerated Reader Points goal.
  - Teachers were integral to hiring decisions
- **Developed a Parent, Teacher, Student Organization (PTSO)**
  - Increased communication between faculty, parents, and students
  - Assigned one teacher per grade to function as liaison between PTSO and faculty



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# We experienced these changes as a result:

- A culture shift – moved from a feeling of “hopelessness” to professional enthusiasm and excitement for student accomplishments
- Instructional focus and enrichment period as positive accelerators of student performance
- Professional Learning Community
- Varied assessments with frequent and consistent feedback throughout all classes
- More caring, cohesive, collaborative, and passionate personnel
- An empowered faculty and staff tackling school improvement
- An increase in student reading and writing expectations from all school personnel
- Active school leadership involvement that responds to teacher input



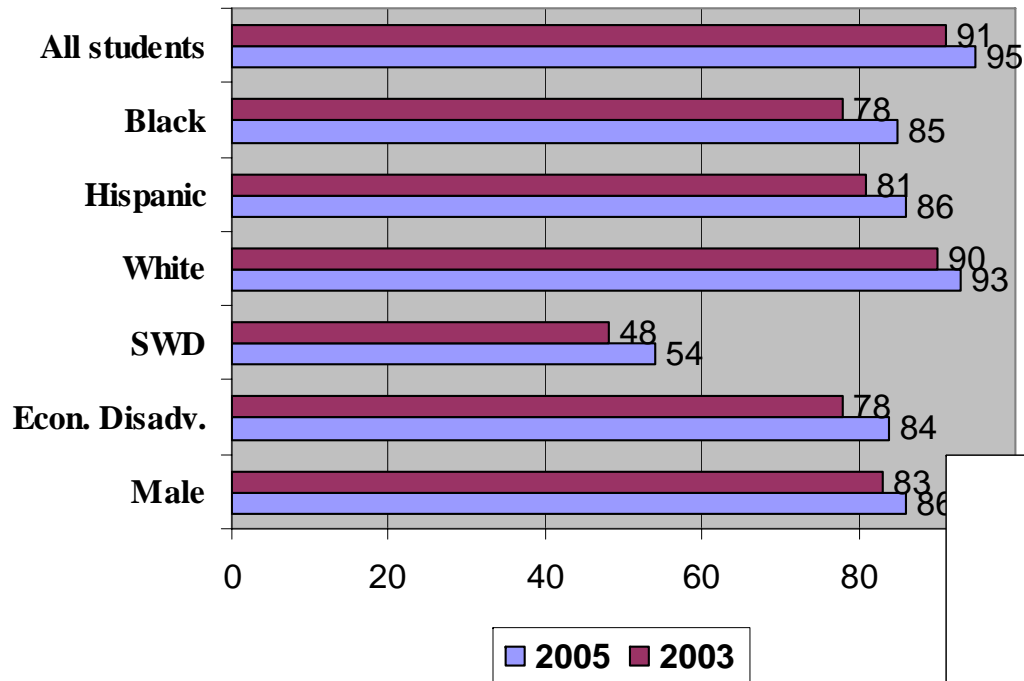
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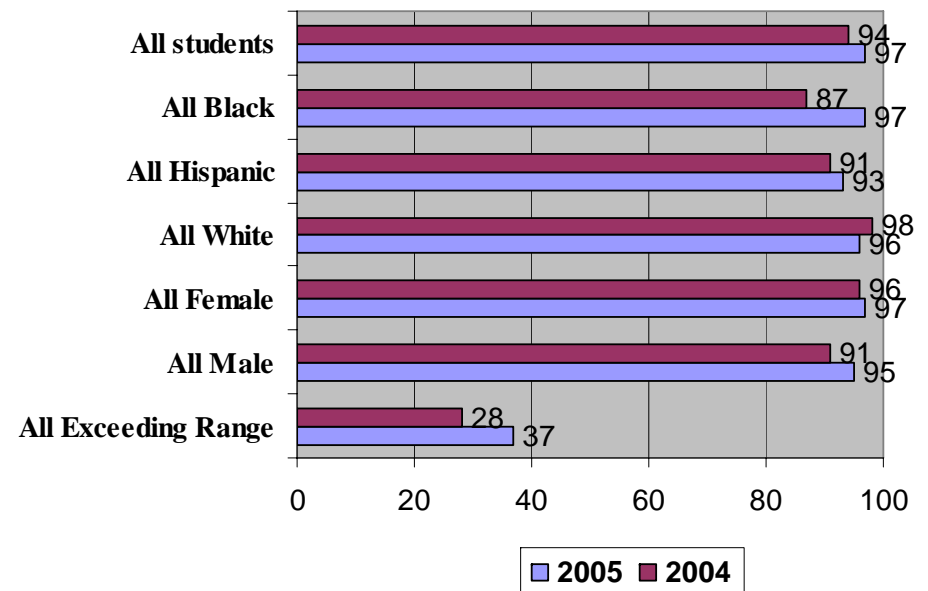
# We gained these results:



## 6-8 CRCT Reading Scores



## Disaggregated Writing Scores



# These other factors influenced our results:

- Student enthusiasm generated by Accelerated Reader student goals and rewards
- Concentrated effort to use differentiated instruction to meet academic needs of all students (ClassWorks, direct instruction, small group/large group instruction, interactive websites, and unique individual teaching strategies of staff)
- Common planning time
- Student engagement maintained through “inspirational buddies”



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# We learned these lessons:

- **Lessons Learned:**
  - Delegating leadership roles among the BST to improve effective communication among all teachers is essential and rewarding
  - Attitude is everything
  - The path to achieving educational excellence is recursive
  - The leader is a part of the team (servant leadership)
  - Diversity in the qualities of Better-Seeking Team members is important
  - Unified support from all faculty/staff and the district is critical
- **Meaning to you as a professional:** I have learned the importance of having a Learning Community in place at Huntington. It is a tool that allows our faculty members to brainstorm and make the best decisions for our students. Our faculty has been very receptive to this plan and look forward to our meetings. As a leader, I do not mind implementing great ideas from a faculty member and giving them credit for their idea. Our main goal is to make sure every student reaches their maximum potential of success.
- **Next steps:**
  - Continue working together as a BST to ensure student achievement
  - Develop a succession plan for continuing the progress
  - Add math as a SMART Goal and as a focus in our enrichment block



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