

Promising Practice

Dr. Michele Taylor

Calhoun City

Calhoun Elementary School

Former Principal (1998-2005)

Currently: Assistant
Superintendent

706-602-6601

taylorm@calhounschools.com



We faced this challenge:

- Background:
 - Teachers were not empowered to actively participate in improvement initiatives
 - Little collaboration among faculty and staff
 - Low morale (loss of gym, playground, lunchroom, and technology)
 - Moderate student achievement expectations
 - Lack of focus and shared vision
- SMART Goal: To improve the Hispanic subgroup's CRCT 4th grade reading scores
- Challenge: Change the culture of the school
- What we implemented: The development of a Better-Seeking Team to focus on student learning



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Our analysis that helped us define the problem:

- **Data analyzed:**
 - Teachers' perception of school culture (Cultural Shift Survey)
 - SACS Accreditation Review
 - RESA Team Review
 - Benchmark testing to identify students needing extra help
- **Causes identified:**
 - Faculty and staff lacked grade level and collaborative planning time
 - The school lacked performance-based programs that focused on the needs of students
 - Teachers relied on administrators to interpret data
 - Teachers didn't know how to analyze and act on student test data
 - Teachers had no time to analyze student test data

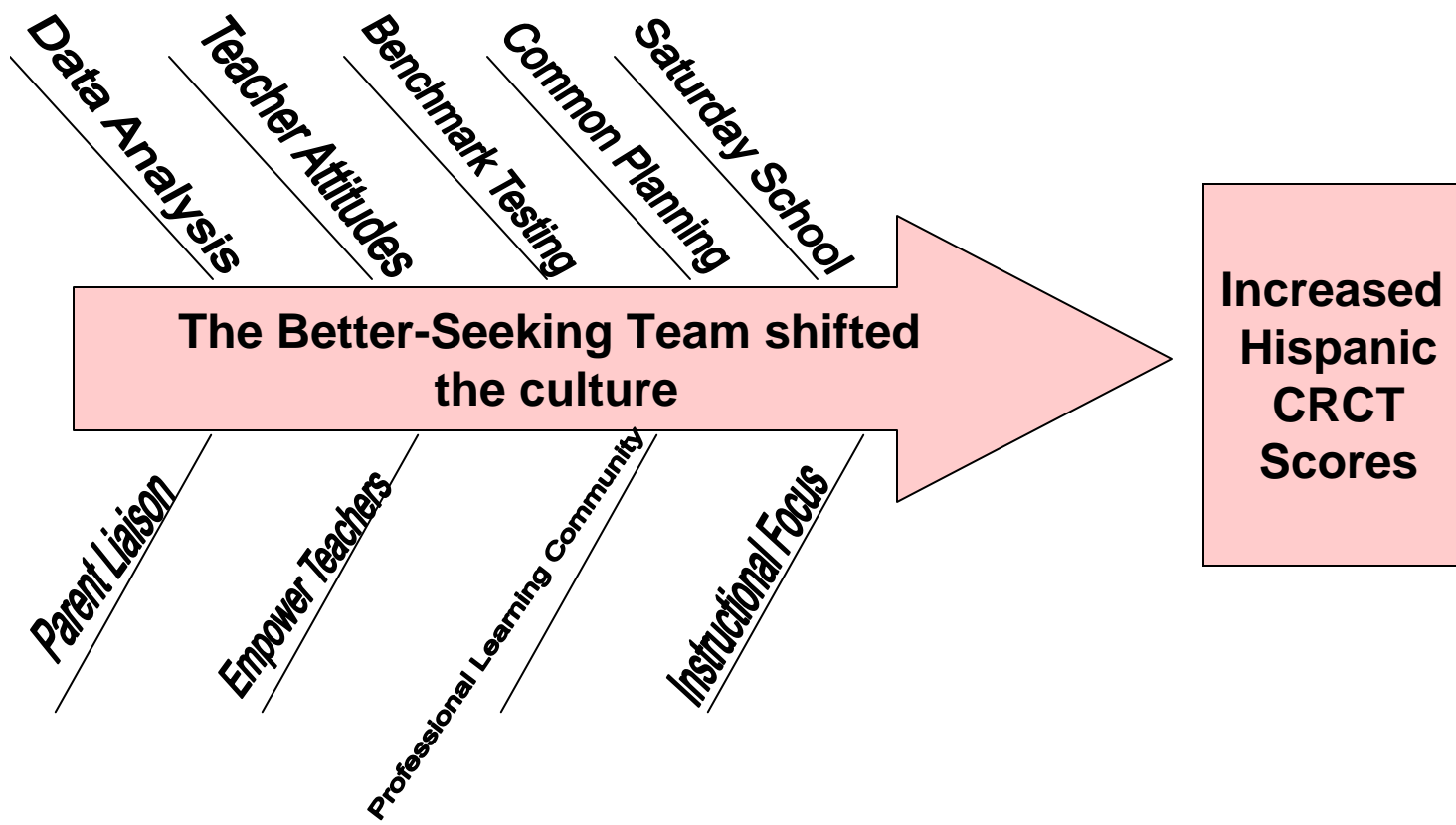
The result of this analysis told us these systems had to change:

- **Systems Impacted:**
 - People (shift in values, beliefs, and collaboration)
 - Operations (scheduling and planning)
 - 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 a Faculty/Staff Better-Seeking Team**
 - Used the Better-Seeking Team Toolkit to successfully identify effective team members
 - Focused on purpose, roles, and responsibilities as well as value added to the school improvement process
 - Provided suggestions regarding collaborative planning and grade level planning
 - Revised instructional schedule to focus on target student group
 - Conveyed sense of urgency to faculty and staff
- **Development of a Student Better-Seeking Team**
- **Teacher Engagement**
 - Monthly collaborative planning time: support staff (secretaries, nurses, bookkeepers, paraprofessionals) covered classes in order for faculty to meet, plan, and evaluate current systems
 - Weekly grade level planning shifted from “housekeeping” to student learning
 - System and school level retreats established vision and fostered collaboration among schools
 - Whole faculty study groups provided a common language and a shared vision
 - Re-focused teacher/leadership objectives to student learning
 - Teachers took ownership of data analysis



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We experienced these changes as a result:

- A culture shift – moved from rejection of change to “we roll with change”
- Stronger and more aligned focus on student learning
- Increased emphasis on the use of data in decision making and examination of student work
- Instructional focus and Saturday School as positive accelerators of student performance
- Professional Learning Community
- Common assessments
- More caring, cohesive, collaborative, and passionate personnel
- An empowered faculty and staff tackling school improvement
- An increase in student expectations from school personnel
- Active school leadership involvement

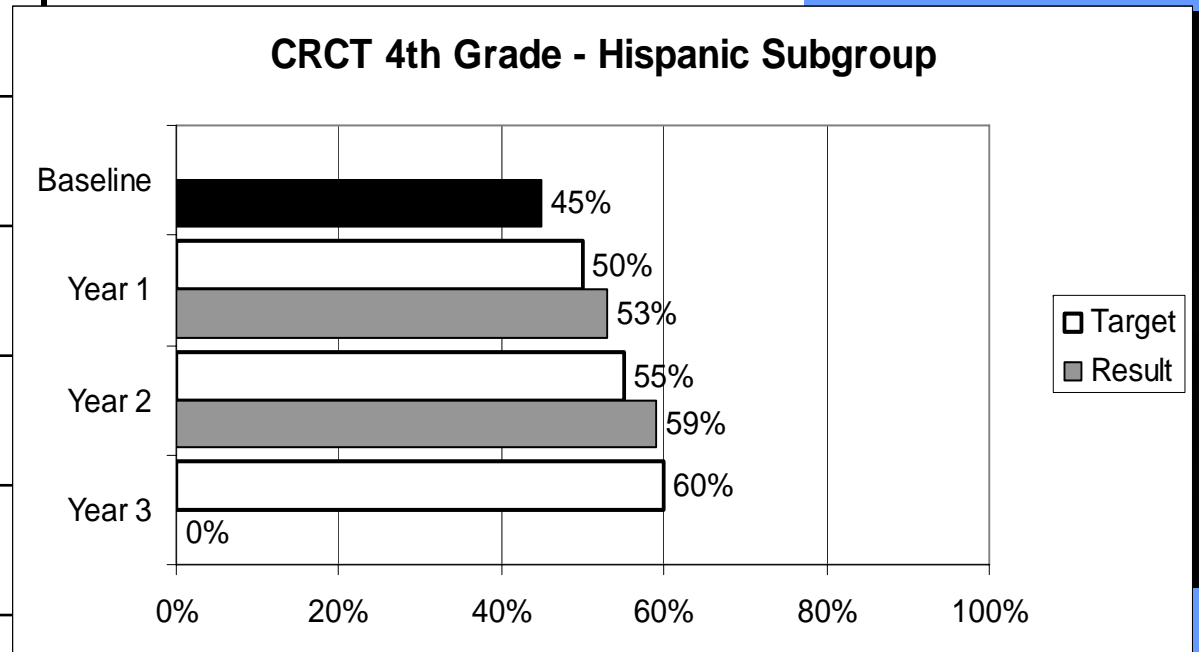


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We gained these results:

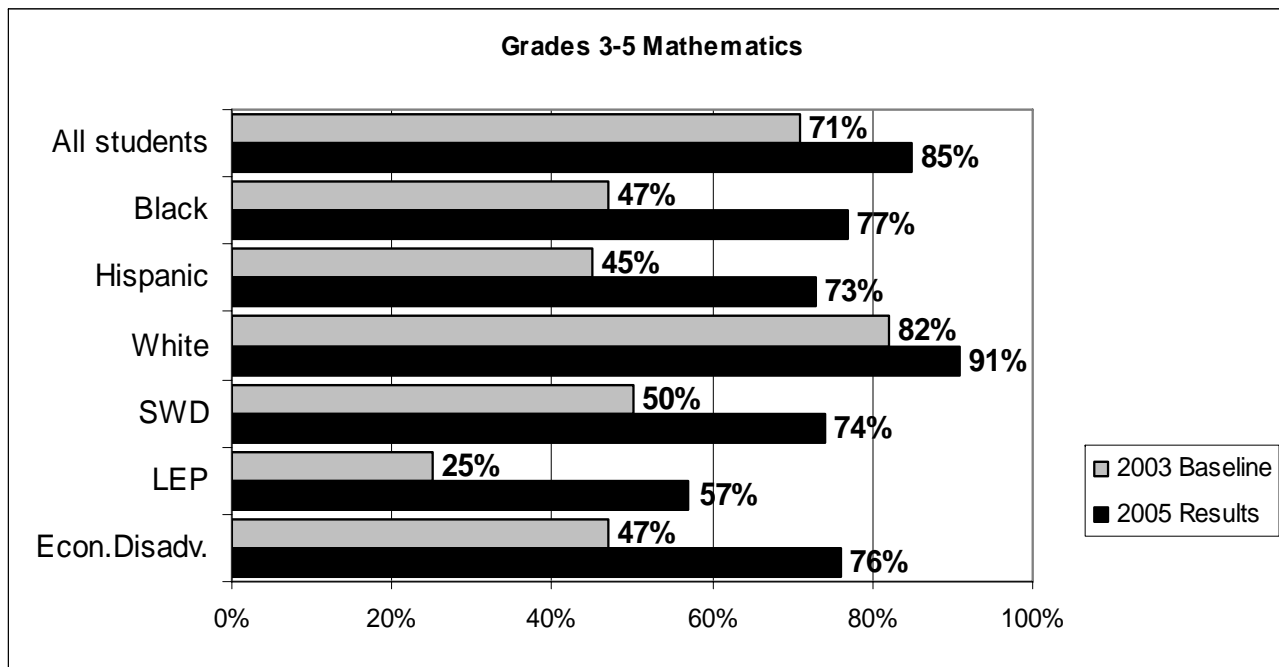
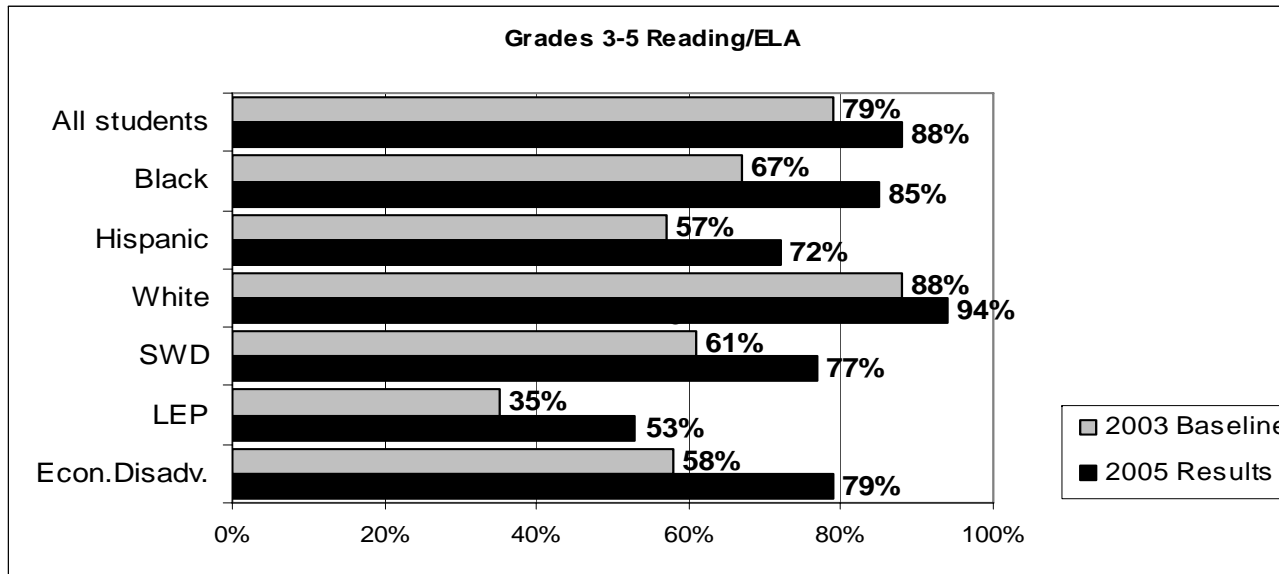


How long have you been with GLISI?	2 Years (Member of Cohorts 4 & 9)
Indicator	CRCT 4 th Grade – Hispanic Subgroup
Baseline	2002 CRCT Scores: 45% Meet/Exceed
Year 1 Target	2003 CRCT Scores: 50% Meet/Exceed
Year 1 Results	2003 CRCT Scores: 53% Meet/Exceed
Year 2 Target	2004 CRCT Scores: 55% Meet/Exceed
Year 2 Results	2004 CRCT Scores: 59% Meet/Exceed
Year 3 Target	2005 CRCT Scores: 60% Meet/Exceed
Year 3 Results	2005 CRCT Scores: Data not available



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We also gained these unintended results...



Though the SMART Goal was specifically targeted at the Hispanic subgroup, Calhoun Elementary experienced significant gains among numerous subgroups as a result of the focus of the Better-Seeking Team. These charts show gains over a 2-year period, from 2003-2005.

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These other factors influenced our results:

- Outreach to parents of targeted students
- Support of limited English proficiency (LEP) Specialist



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We learned these lessons:

- **Lessons Learned:**
 - Diversity in the qualities of Better-Seeking Team members is important
 - Attitude is everything
 - Achieving educational excellence is an ongoing journey with many stops along the way
 - The leader is a part of the team (servant leadership)
 - Unified support from the district is critical
- **Meaning to you as a professional:**
 - Empowering teachers to continually seek better ways for school improvement has been extremely rewarding to me as a professional. I recognize that the only way to develop widespread leadership is to make developing leaders a part of the school culture. Our Better- Seeker Team was a team united and leading the way for teachers to focus on student learning. This was a powerful experience for me as a principal to be a part of such a dedicated team!
- **Next steps:**
 - Continue working together as a BST to ensure student achievement
 - Develop a succession plan for continuing the work
 - Develop/refine Balanced Scorecard



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