

Promising Practice

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We faced this challenge:

- Background: The school focus was on teaching instead of student learning.
 - Teacher planning was focused on tracking content coverage based on curriculum maps; little time was spent discussing student work or content mastery.
 - Teachers had low to moderate student achievement expectations for minority and low-income students.
 - Teachers did not use frequent assessments to monitor student progress.
- SMART Goal: To improve school-wide AYP scores in Reading/Language Arts and Math, focusing on the scores of students with disabilities, minority students, and students who receive free or reduced lunch services.
- Challenge: To change the mindset of teachers concerning student achievement of subpopulations and to change the culture of the school from one focused on teaching to one focused on learning.
- What we implemented: Extensive professional learning opportunities focused on student learning.



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Our analysis that helped us define the problem:

- **Data analyzed:**
 - Disaggregated CRCT scores for the entire school, each team, and for individual students
 - CRCT trend data for the past four years
 - Correlation between student grades and CRCT scores
 - Survey and observation of teachers' ability to analyze and use data to plan instruction
- **Causes Identified:**
 - Teachers did not have a clear understanding of how to analyze data or use it to plan instruction
 - Teachers were not collaborating effectively to improve student learning
 - Teachers did not understand the difference between planning for teaching and planning for learning
 - Teachers did not understand the difference between assessment and evaluation

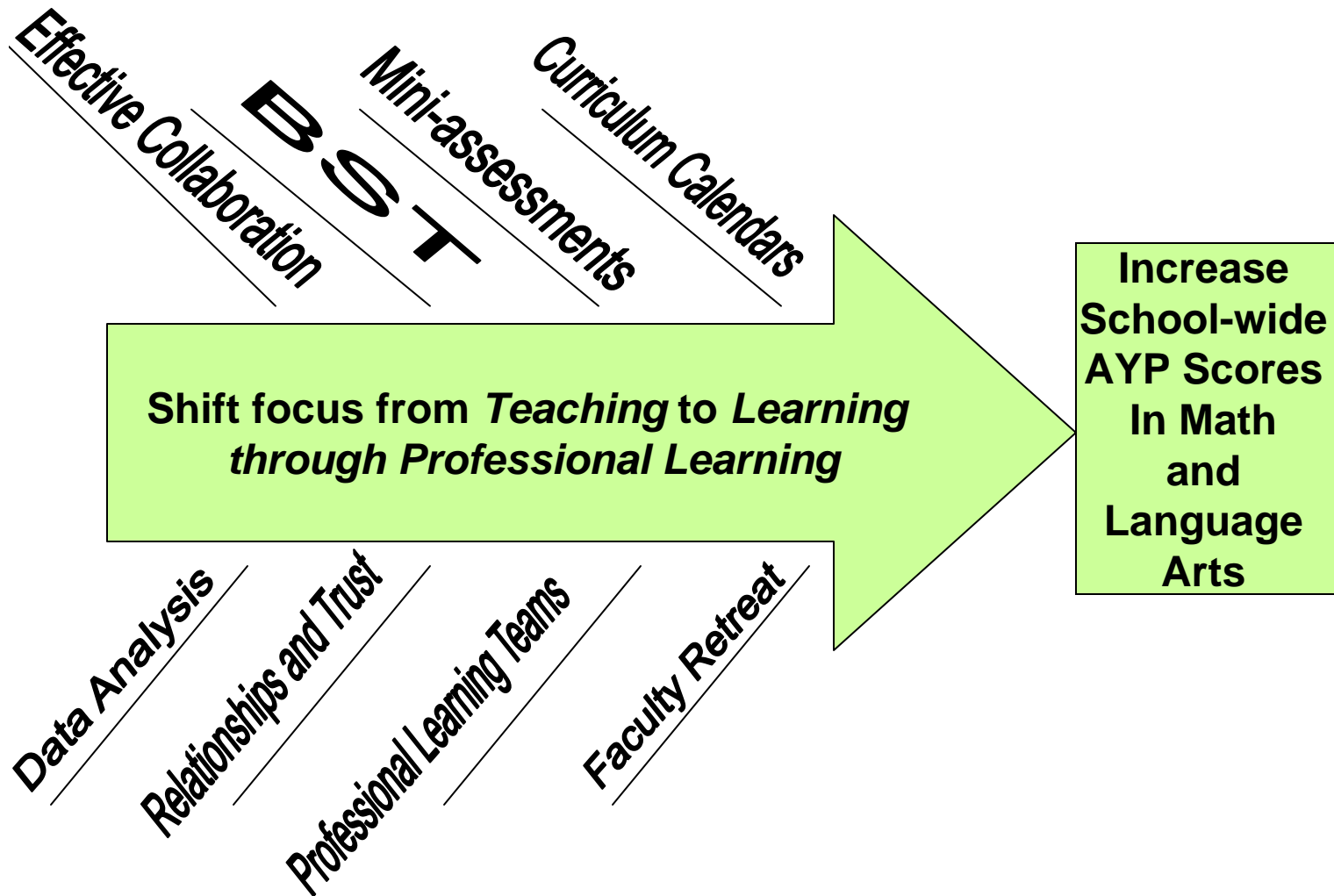
The result of this analysis told us these systems had to change:

- **Professional Learning (weekly, embedded and specific to school goals)**
 - People (paradigm shift toward subpopulations, assessment and student learning)
 - Operations and Scheduling (reconstruction of planning time and schedules)



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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:

- Created **Professional Learning** opportunities through:
 - Weekly in-house professional learning focused on data analysis, assessment, and student learning provided by administration during staff meetings
 - Professional Learning Communities separated by:
 - grade level subject area teachers (e.g. 6th grade math)
 - departments (e.g. science)
 - administration and department heads
 - A Better-Seeking Team challenged to bring the entire faculty together to follow one vision
 - A Better-Seeking Team concentrating on what changes needed to be made in the mindset of teachers and the school
- Mandated a protocol for collaborative planning which specified meeting times and **student learning** foci based on a “must discuss/must do” list
- Held a school-wide retreat to establish **relationships** and to build **trust** among teachers



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We experienced these changes as a result:

- Instructional Shift – Teachers began approaching teaching using different designs when planning, asking DuFour’s: “What do I want my students to learn?, “How will I know when they learned it?, and “What am I going to do if they don’t learn it?”
- Focus Shift -- from teaching to student learning.
- Students more involved with their own learning.
- A sense of urgency to increase achievement for ALL students.
- Teachers were empowered to make thoughtful decisions regarding instructional operational practices.
- Professional Learning Communities built understanding and a common language with the entire faculty.
- An improvement in teacher morale and renewed excitement.
- An increase in performance expectations for all students.



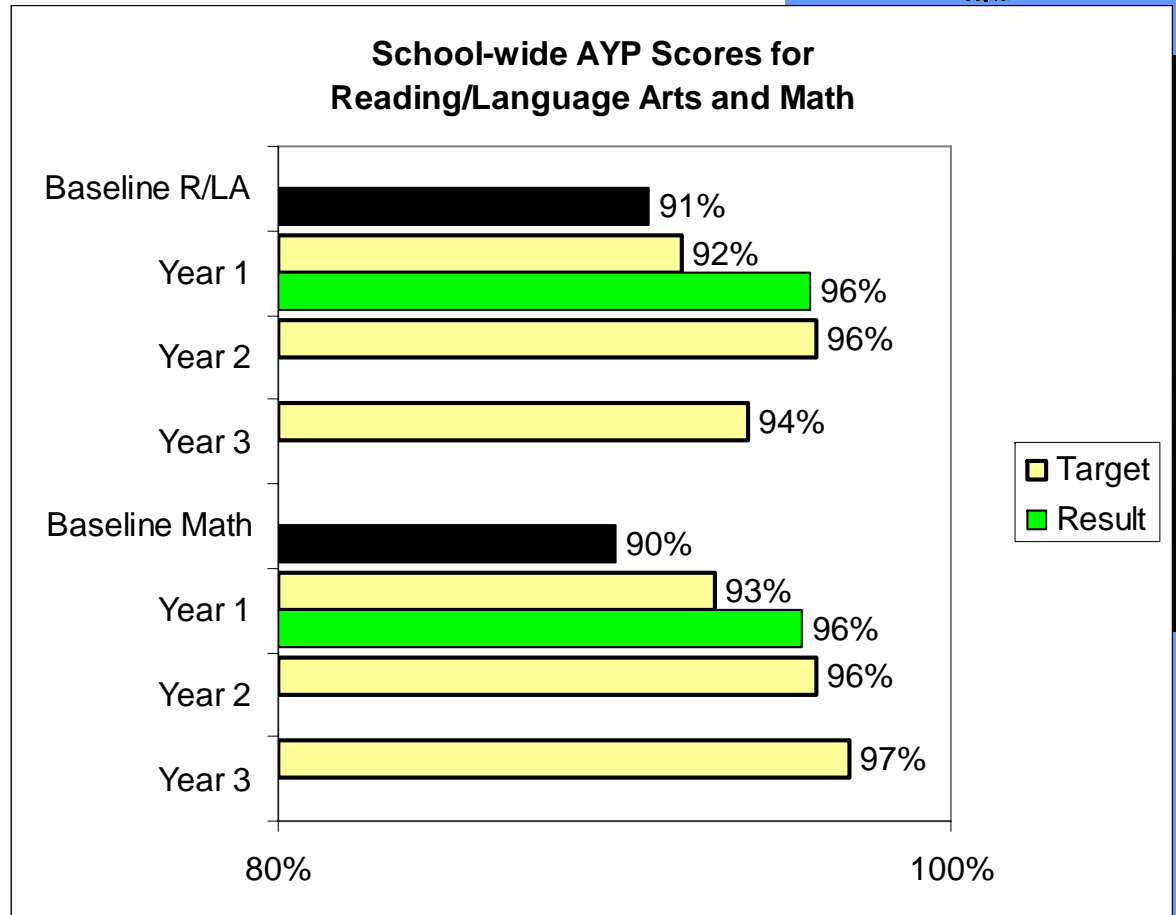
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We gained these results:

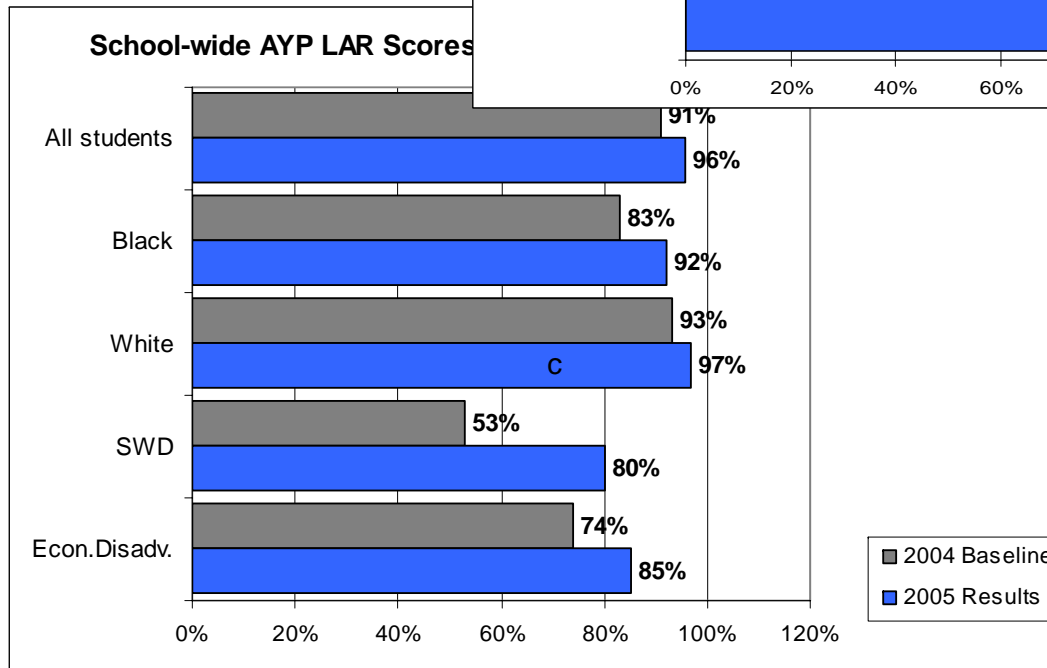
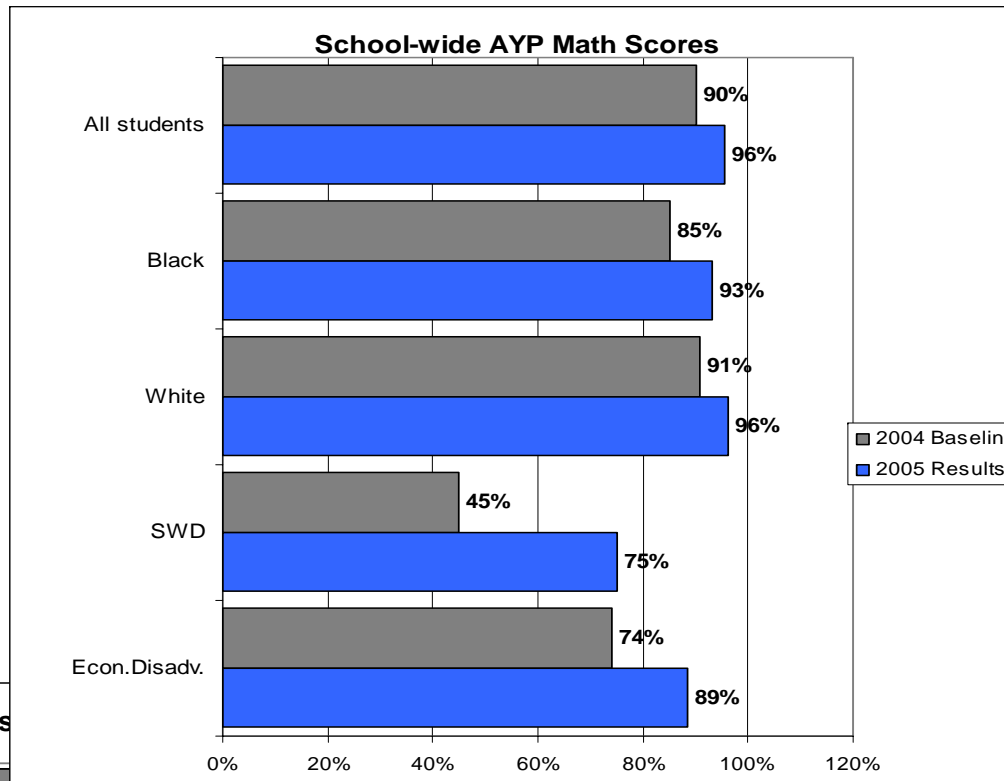


2 years with GLISI	Member of Cohort 7
Indicator	School-wide AYP scores for Rdg/ Lang Arts and Math
Baseline Spring 2004	Rdg/Lang. Arts– 91% Math – 90%
Year 1 Target Spring 2005	Rdg/Lang Arts– 92% Math – 93%
Year 1 Results	Rdg/Lang. Arts–95.8% Math - 95.6%
Year 2 Target Spring 2006	Rdg/Lang. Arts –96% Math -96%
Year 2 Results	Rdg/Lang. Arts – Math -
Year 3 Target Spring 2007	Rdg/Lang. Arts –97% Math - 97%
Year 3 Results	Rdg/Lang. Arts – Math -



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We also gained these unintended results...



Previously, our instruction was based on the traditional belief that student achievement lay solely in teacher practices; therefore, our focus was on teaching instead of student learning. Through the creation of our BST and Professional Learning Communities, we have experienced a culture shift. Now instead of focusing on teaching, teachers collaborate and plan for student learning. As a result, we have seen tremendous gains in the achievement of all students and, more significantly, gains in our subpopulations.

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These other factors influenced our results:

- Addition of *Classworks* software program (remediation and enrichment software program).
- Addition of a 30-minutes novels reading class in 6th grade every morning.
- Push to increase recreational reading in 8th grade using our AR program as an incentive
- Increase in the number of students participating in our academic mentor support program
- Extensive Superintendent support
- Teacher observation program allowing teachers to observe their peers and discuss the techniques they saw



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We learned these lessons:

- **Lessons Learned:**

- Teachers must feel safe in the face of change and know that we are all in this together.
- It doesn't matter *where* you start, just *that* you START.
- The attitudes and actions of the leadership must reflect the attitude and actions desired from the teachers.
- Praise the smallest steps forward!

- **Meaning to you as a professional:**

- Constructing and developing a Better Seeking Team and empowering teachers to “write the script” for change has dramatically transformed the school’s culture. Teachers have a renewed excitement about their profession and share collaborative responsibility for the achievement of ALL students. As we convene in grade-level, department, BST, and informal meetings, conversations are centered on student work, performance, and achievement. Teachers are supporting each other and sharing ideas across grade levels and subject areas. This excites me because my passion is instruction and for the first time as principal, I feel like the instructional leader instead of the building manager!

- **Next steps:**

- Continue to further develop professional learning communities
- Establish curriculum calendars and common assessments to reflect the new GPS
- Continue training and modeling of differentiated instruction
- Concentrate on Assessment FOR Learning



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