

Promising Practice

Dianna Blizzard

Jones County

Dames Ferry Elementary

Grades K-5

Principal

478-986-2023

dblizzard@jones.k12.ga.us

[https://www.edline.net/pages/Dames Ferry Elementary School](https://www.edline.net/pages/Dames_Ferry_Elementary_School)



About our Better-seeking Team:

- Dames Ferry Elementary's (DFE) BST is comprised of:
 - Grade-level Lead Teachers, K-5
 - GPS Redelivery Team Members, K-5
 - Early Intervention Program (EIP) Teachers
 - Representative of Fine Arts Program
 - Representative of the Program for Exceptional Children
 - School Counselor
 - School RTI/SST/504 Coordinator (RTI=Response-to-Intervention)
 - Principal and Assistant Principal
- Selection Process:
 - Members of the DFE BST were selected based on their level of involvement and understanding of:
 - GPS Standards, RTI, Differentiated Instruction, Data Analysis
- Additional Training Provided:
 - Max Thompson's Learning-focused Schools
 - Data Analysis and Application
 - Animated Literacy K-2



Dianna Blizzard
Dames Ferry
Elementary

We faced this challenge:

- **Background:** The Jones County Board of Education charged all schools in our district to demonstrate documented gains in the following areas over a three-year period through the implementation of a *Continuous Improvement Plan (CIP)* and *Balanced Scorecard (BSC)*:
 - Academic Achievement
 - Operational Effectiveness
 - School Climate
- **SMART Goal:** The desired outcome of this district and school initiative was to:
 - Improve SWD fifth-grade CRCT Reading scores with the hope that increasing these skills will also improve the high school graduation rate from the baseline of 63% in 2005/06 to 78% in 2008/09 (county-mandated)
- **Challenge:**
 - To educate all employees regarding the CIP and BSC
 - To develop both county and school CIPs and BSCs
 - To implement, monitor, and document progress by means of the CIP and BSC
- **Implementation Strategies:**
 - Trained through the GLISI Model of School Improvement
 - Established BSTs at the central and school levels to develop CIPs and BSCs
 - Collaboratively compiled and shared data across the system



Dianna Blizzard

Dames Ferry
Elementary

Our data analysis helped us define the causes of the problem:



- **Data Reviewed:**

- Quarterly benchmark results from all grade levels for 2006/07
- Data analysis results for all grade levels for 2006/07
- CRCT sub-group results from 2005/06 and for 2006/07
- Stakeholder surveys
- Demographic and sub-group information from 2005/06 and 2006/07 CRCTs

- **Causes Identified:**

- Stakeholders were unfamiliar with the processes and necessary tools needed for utilizing 'data-driven' decision-making
- Classrooms were not standards-based
- Communication from the school to the community stakeholders was very limited and did not focus on improvement initiatives

- **Systems in Need of Change:**

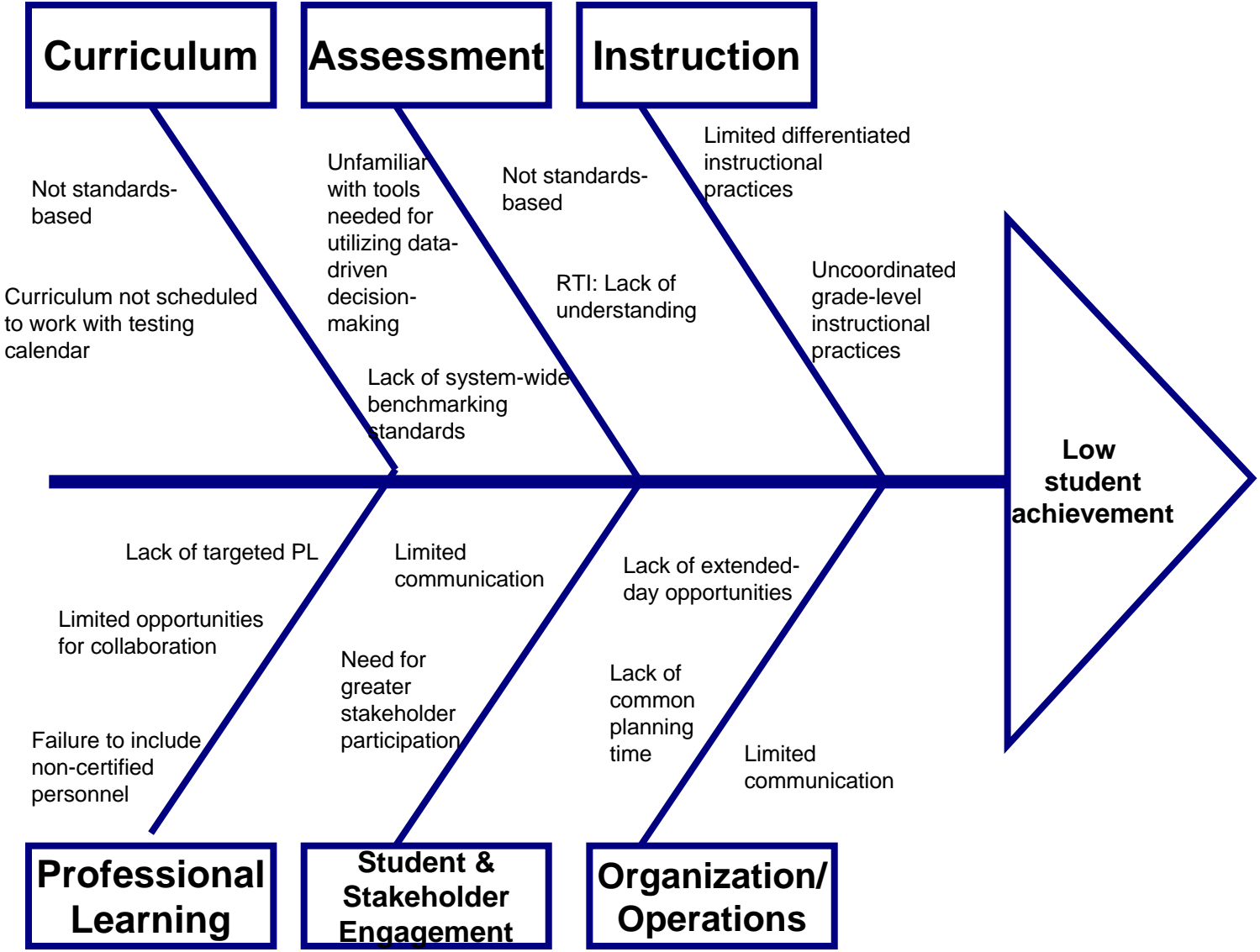
- Curriculum: (focus on standards-based practices)
- Operation: (open lines of communication with stakeholders)
- People: (provide targeted professional learning to enhance necessary skills)



Dianna Blizzard

Dames Ferry
Elementary

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



Dianna Blizzard
Dames Ferry Elementary

Our analysis compared our practices to best practices. Here is how we determined what needed to change:

How did the team analyze current practices against best practices?

- **Surveyed stakeholders:**
 - Results reflected that not all stakeholders had been actively engaged in decision-making, training, and data reviews.
 - Results indicated that stakeholders had very limited knowledge of school initiatives due to a lack of consistent communication between the school and the community.
 - Results confirmed that many stakeholders were not familiar, nor were they adequately trained with, the necessary tools needed for utilizing 'data-driven' decision-making.
 - Results demonstrated that stakeholders felt that only limited communication was received from the school regarding school improvement initiatives and school long-term goals
- **Review of historical data:**
 - Trend data indicated that math scores in both second and fourth grades were below targeted goals.
 - A three-year review of the percentage of absences in excess of 15 days revealed an alarming increase that was far below targeted goals.
 - Inspection of sub-population data denoted 'flat-line' growth with minority special education students in grades 3-5.
- **What changes in the current practice were targeted based on findings?**
 - Better design professional learning to meet targeted objectives
 - Broaden the baseline of stakeholders to be included in professional learning opportunities
 - Develop a School Improvement Plan and Balanced Scorecard that aligned with the county and state goals
 - Implement incentive plans to enhance student attendance
 - Better inform the community of school programs through more open and varied means of communication
 - Design a school schedule which allows for common grade-level planning time



Dianna Blizzard
Dames Ferry
Elementary

We selected this set of solutions to implement to solve the problem



Dianna Blizzard
Dames Ferry
Elementary

- **Professional Learning:** To ensure that all stakeholders were adequately trained to address the standards based classroom needs and differentiated instructional strategies necessary for full implementation of RTI the following targets were identified:
 - Data Analysis
 - Learning-focused Schools
 - GPS implementation
 - Curriculum mapping
 - Effective researched based instructional practices
- **School Improvement Plan and BSC:** To engage all stakeholders in the development of the SIP/BSC the following solutions were identified:
 - Identify modes of communication that could be utilized for the purpose of sharing school initiative information with all stakeholders
 - Make provisions for a resource center in which stakeholders would have access to archived and current school data
- **School Incentive Plan:** To create school-wide motivational practices to address attendance and behavioral concerns
- **Operational Effectiveness:** To develop a school schedule that provided the opportunity for grade-level/program common planning time
- **Summarize the reasons behind their selection:**
 - The ‘Five Whys’ and the ‘Fishbone’ study indicated to our BST the need to target these areas.
 - Trend data highlighted these areas as points of weakness
 - Stakeholder surveys supported our findings
- **What were the criteria used to select the solutions?**
 - Two consecutive years of noted deficiency
 - Dissatisfaction noted by the stakeholder survey
 - State adoption of GPS and county expectations of which we were lacking skill/knowledge

We took these actions to implement the set of solutions:



Dianna Blizzard

Dames Ferry
Elementary

- **Implemented Target Teaching Based on Data Results**
 - Completed item analysis data sheets per classroom and per student
 - Established extended-day opportunities for specific students based on needs identified from data analysis
 - Created RTI teams to progress monitor the interventions of identified students and to provide support as needed
- **Created monthly curriculum maps based on the GPS curriculum**
 - Provided professional learning to support implementation
 - Established specific guidelines for RTI to support instruction
 - Trained all staff in differentiated instruction, assessment for learning, RTI strategies, and interventions
 - Created resource notebooks to support the implementation of the new monthly GPS maps
 - Utilized grade-level common planning time to ensure all teachers were progressing through the maps efficiently
 - Collaborated with PEC, SLP, EIP, Fine Arts, and Gifted to ensure curriculum was cohesive for students
- **Benchmarks were developed, administered and analyzed**
 - Each school sent representatives to collaboratively create county-wide benchmarks based on GPS curriculum maps
 - Benchmarks were administered as a pre-test and later as a post-test so growth could be monitored
 - Data Analysis, in the form of *Item Analysis* documents based on benchmark results, allowed us to identify instructional needs as well as 'students at risk'
- **The SIP and BSC** focused our attention on areas of weakness that became the focal point of our target teaching and extended day learning opportunities
- **Teachers were provided extensive training with RTI.** Once trained, teachers were able to accurately identify and monitor those students most at risk. Weekly RTI meetings held during their common planning period assisted teachers in planning and implementing the best practices to meet these students' needs
- **Detailed written commentaries and monthly lesson plans** were provided to parents to better engage them in their child's education
- **A school-wide incentive plan** was put in place and was supervised by the school counselor. The plan supported our 'Discipline Code of Conduct' and rewarded perfect attendance. Students were provided charms for demonstrated growth/behaviors
- **Established 45-minute common daily planning periods** for all teachers grades K-5

We tracked our impact and results...



Dianna Blizzard
Dames Ferry
Elementary

- Our RTI team established protocols and forms to be used to track student progress
 - Parent notification letters
 - Progress monitoring forms
- Benchmark scores were recorded on every student on a comparison spreadsheet
 - Each grade level uses a magnetic board to place individual student reading and math cards (according to their benchmark scores) to identify students at risk
 - Common planning time allows the RTI team to meet with grade-level teachers to identify students at risk and establish intervention plans
 - Progress monitoring of the interventions shows student improvement
- Bi-annual Progress Report to Jones County Board of Education by principals to monitor overall county growth status

We experienced these changes as a result:

- Our grade-level teams operated as a more cohesive unit:
 - All teachers knew which students were at risk
 - All teachers were kept informed of research-based strategies to use in the classroom and modified their instruction to meet the needs of struggling students
 - All teachers were involved in the implementation of interventions within their classrooms to help all students be successful
 - Intervention teachers focused on the most at-risk students and progress was seen
 - Parents received progress reports and were given the necessary assistance to help their child at home—through commentaries, conferences, Edline updates, and after-school activities
- Increased student attendance/participation with after-school tutoring and Saturday School extended day opportunities
- Minority and special needs sub-groups have demonstrated consistent gains across grade levels and subject matter
- Increased communication between all schools within the system regarding program needs
- Decisions regarding the purchasing of materials, professional learning, and instructional resources are based on demonstrated academic needs



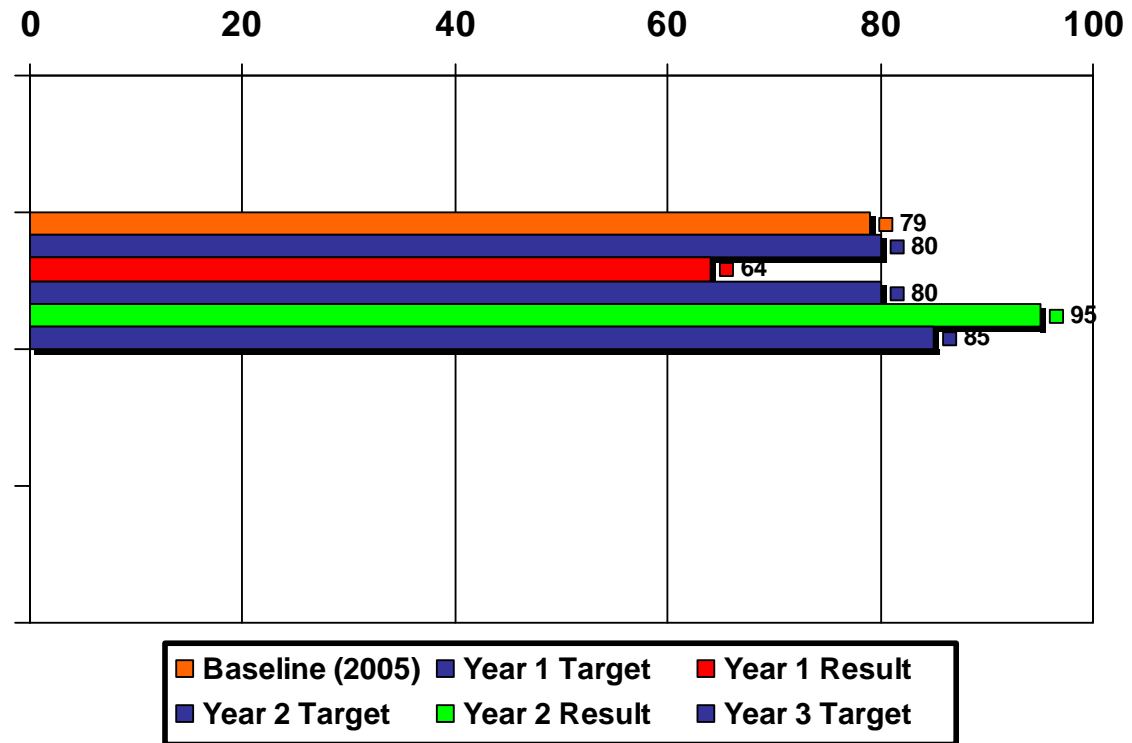
Dianna Blizzard

Dames Ferry
Elementary

We gained these targeted measurable results:



| | |
|------------------------------------|---|
| How long have you been with GLISI? | 2005/06 - 2007/08 Cohorts 12 & 20 |
| Indicator | Grade 5: SWD To increase the percentage who meet/exceed in the area of reading |
| Baseline (2005) | 79% |
| Year 1 Target (2006) | 80% |
| Year 1 Results (2006) | 64% (-) |
| Year 2 Target (2007) | 80% |
| Year 2 Results (2007) | 95% (+) |
| Year 3 Target (2008) | 85% |
| Year 3 Results (2008) | Yet to be determined |



We also gained these unanticipated measurable results...



Benchmark Results of those scoring 70% and above

| | | | | | | |
|--------------|--------|------------|--------|------------|--------|------------|
| First Grade | #1 Pre | #1 post | #2 Pre | #2 Post | #3 Pre | #3 Post |
| Reading | 83% | 93% | 41% | 74% | 38% | 64% |
| Language | 65% | 91% | 49% | 82% | 45% | 83% |
| Math | 41% | 86% | 30% | 86% | 54% | 86% |
| Second Grade | #1 Pre | #1 post | #2 Pre | #2 Post | #3 Pre | #3 Post |
| Reading | 67% | 89% | 43% | 74% | 60% | 84% |
| Language | 74% | 86% | 44% | 77% | 63% | 87% |
| Math | 88% | 95% | 9% | 69% | 47% | 84% |
| Third grade | #1 Pre | #1 post | #2 Pre | #2 Post | #3 Pre | #3 Post |
| Reading | 16% | 29% | 26% | 70% | 40% | 76% |
| Language | 24% | 51% | 59% | 73% | 46% | 75% |
| Math | 13% | 29% | 14% | 73% | 22% | 79% |
| Fourth grade | #1 Pre | #1 post | #2 Pre | #2 Post | #3 Pre | #3 Post |
| Reading | 43% | 74% | 51% | 89% | 58% | 83% |
| Language | 40% | 75% | 12% | 71% | 59% | 83% |
| Math | 37% | 63% | 8% | 67% | 6% | 69% |
| Fifth grade | #1 Pre | #1 post | #2 Pre | #2 Post | #3 Pre | #3 Post |
| Reading | 38% | 54% | 62% | 85% | 29% | 77% |
| Language | 39% | 69% | 28% | 62% | 28% | 71% |
| Math | 4% | 46% | 2% | 47% | 3% | 70% |



Dianna Blizzard

Dames Ferry
Elementary

These other factors influenced our results (county benefits):

- Professional development opportunities were expanded for teachers as a result of the collaborative work of the elementary school. Financial resources were able to be shared and joint scheduling was possible.
- The development of the school-level Continuous Improvement Plan brought attention to our specific technological deficiencies, our personnel shortages, and scheduling issues which were able to be addressed at the Central Office level. Prior to our CIP implementation, our concerns often went unnoticed.



Dianna Blizzard

Dames Ferry
Elementary

We learned these lessons:

- **Lessons Learned:**

- RTI was an ever-changing and on-going process that was critical to our meeting the needs of all students.
- Professional learning would need to continue to address best practices, differentiated instruction, assessment for learning, and RTI.
- Resources would need to be allocated to address the areas of need.
- The engagement of all stakeholders is important for success in implementing standards-based classrooms based on data.

What this meant to us as professionals:

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

- Our faculty members have become data-driven decision-makers. We know that we must have the data to support all academic decisions and our ultimate goal is to help produce life-long learners—which in turn will help improve the graduation rate in Jones County.



Dianna Blizzard
Dames Ferry
Elementary

Our Solution Implementation Summary:

- **Our Challenge:**
 - To Improve the graduation rate in Jones County
 - To educate all employees regarding the CIP and BSC
 - To develop both county and school CIPs and BSCs
 - To implement, monitor, and document progress by means of the CIP and BSC
- **Implementation:**
 - Trained through the GLISI Model of School Improvement
 - Established BSTs at the central and school levels to develop CIPs and BSCs
 - Collaboratively compiled and shared data across the system
- **Systems in Need of Change:**
 - Curriculum: (focus on standards based practices)
 - Operation: (open lines of communication with stakeholders)
 - People: (provide targeted professional learning to enhance necessary skills)
- **Implemented Target Teaching Based on data results**
- **Developed a School Improvement Plan and Balanced Scorecard**
- **Created monthly curriculum maps based on the GPS curriculum**
- **Created RTI teams to monitor student progress**



Dianna Blizzard
Dames Ferry
Elementary