

# Promising Practice

Dr. Wayne A. Hickman  
Burke County  
Burke County High School  
Principal  
706.554.6691

[wahickman@burke.k12.ga.us](mailto:wahickman@burke.k12.ga.us)

[http://www.burke.k12.ga.us/BCHS/  
index.htm](http://www.burke.k12.ga.us/BCHS/index.htm)



# About Our Better-seeking Team:



- Burke County High School BST
  - **Selected Team Members:** Principal, APs, Math Teacher, Science Teacher, Social Studies Teacher, CTAE Teacher, Math Department Chair, and French Teacher (ELA Representative).
  - **Selected Teachers based on observed leadership traits** and/or success in the classroom. Our entire administrative team was included.
  - **Implemented the GLISI BST structures for collaboration.**
  - **Utilized Schmoker's concept of time-effective meetings.**
  - **Focused on student achievement.**

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# We faced this challenge:

- **Background:**
  - Leadership was not distributed among teachers; therefore teachers were not truly empowered to develop, implement, and sustain school improvement initiatives.
  - Little collaboration among faculty and staff—even within departments.
  - Lack of focus and shared vision for school improvement and increased student achievement.
  - Moderate and inconsistent student achievement expectations.
- **SMART Goal:** BCHS will improve the math skills proficiency of all subgroups in grades 9-11 from 64.8% to 75.0% meeting and exceeding standards as measured by the Enhanced GHSGT-Mathematics by Spring 2008.
- **Process Goal:** To establish and implement a systematic process for teachers to meet collaboratively in order to develop units of study, common assessments, and analyze student work. (GSS: Curriculum Strand, Instruction Strand, Assessment Strand, Planning and Organization Strand, Professional Learning Strand, Leadership Strand, and School Culture Strand)
- **Change the culture of the school and develop teacher leaders.**



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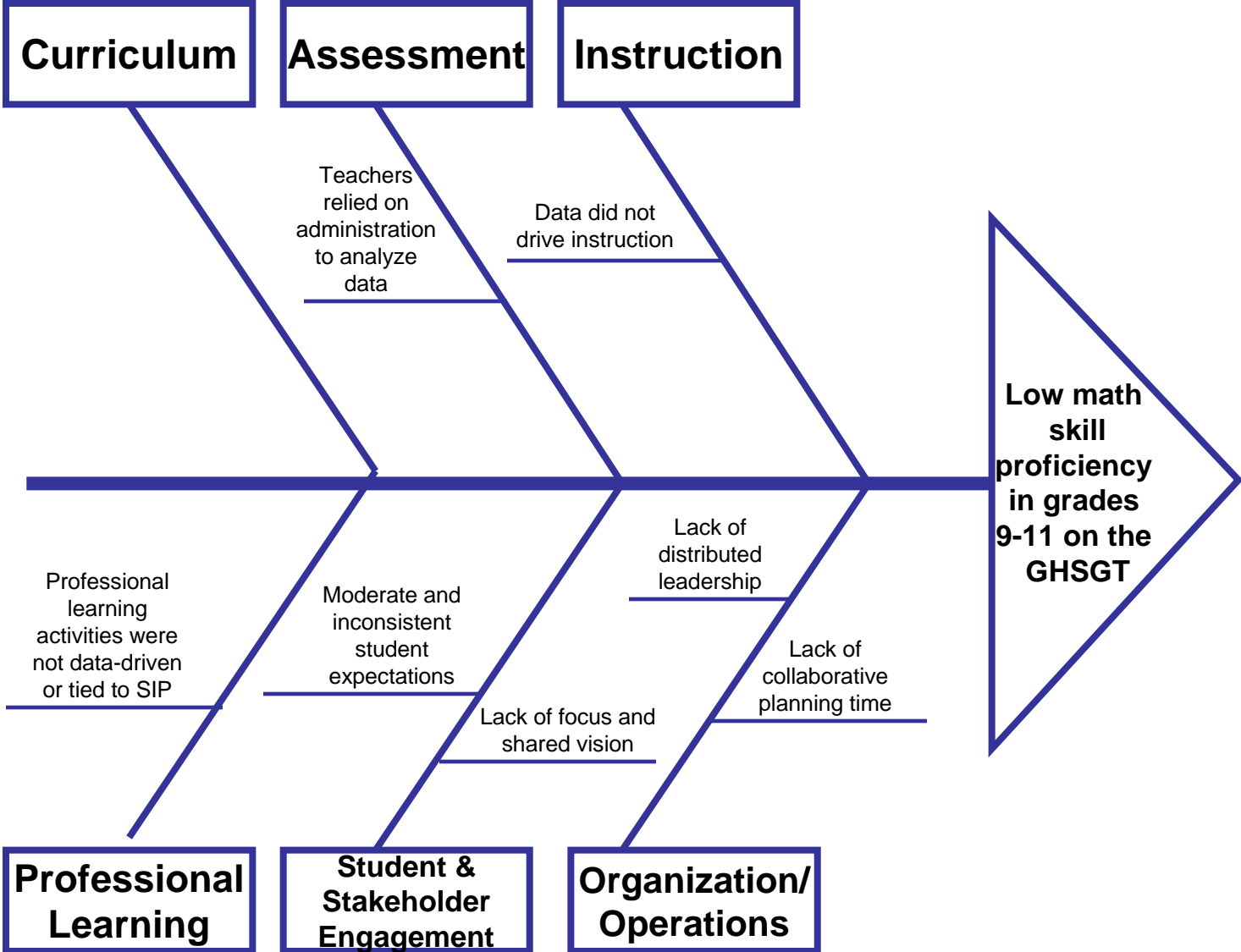
# Our data analysis helped us define the causes of the problem:

- **Data analyzed:**
  - Annual staff perception survey results
  - GHSGT, GHSWT, EOCT data
  - Benchmark testing to identify students not meeting standards
  - Departmental discussions
  - Observations and conversations
- **Causes identified:**
  - Faculty and staff lacked dedicated collaborative planning time
  - Professional learning activities were not data-driven nor were they tied to the School Improvement Plan
  - Teachers relied on administrators to interpret data
  - No clear plan existed that utilized data to drive instruction for the purpose of improved student achievement
  - Pervasive lack of understanding of how to develop and implement improvement strategies
- **The result of this analysis told us that these systems had to change:**
  - People (collaboration, beliefs)
  - Operation (scheduling, planning, distribution of leadership)
  - Instruction (strategies, accountability)
  - Curriculum (GPS alignment, curriculum mapping)



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



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

As a result of establishing our Better-seeking Team and participating in the CSRA RESA Data Retreat, our BST...

- **Examined current collaborative planning efforts** and determined that a more focused plan was needed.
- **Developed a series of concise tasks** designed to guide teachers through a critical examination of hard and soft data.
- **Engaged in the appropriate discussion** of what concerns exist and why those concerns exist.
- **Determined root causes** using root cause analysis to decide what could be done within the scope of the school to address the concerns.
- **Implemented strategies for improvement**, with continuous monitoring, and revisions based upon benchmark data.



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

- **What we implemented:**
  - A **Teacher-driven Better-seeking Team** with a focus on:
    - **Data analysis** to determine specific needs, targets, benchmark progress, growth, and achievement
    - **Collaboration – vertical and horizontal** – for the purpose of enhancing student learning and achievement
    - **Support of the system-wide and school goals and strategies** for improving student achievement in math
- **Solutions:**
  - Implementing the GLISI BST Framework (Distributed Leadership)
  - Utilizing the CSRA RESA Data Retreat Process
  - Implementing the *Learning Focused Schools* Strategies
  - Implementing the *Classroom Instruction That Works* Strategies
  - Using the *Examining Student Work* Framework
- **Reasons:**

The solutions were selected based on hard and soft data gathered through surveys, observations, and conversations with teachers, which revealed a general lack of focus on effective instructional practices and collaborative planning.



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# We took these actions to implement the set of solutions:

- **Focused training** on research-based instructional strategies, collaboratively examining student work, and data analysis
- **Changed faculty meeting format** to focus on professional learning and collaborative planning
- **Developed 4 ½-week common assessments** (benchmarks)
- **Developed a Better-seeking Team** which would:
  - Analyze hard and soft data
  - Lead departmental data analysis efforts
  - Develop departmental strategic action plans



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# We tracked our impact and results...

- **Gathered and monitored student data:**
  - Benchmark assessments
  - Report grades
  - GHSGT results
  - EOCT results
- **Gathered and monitored staff data:**
  - Collaborative planning minutes
  - Frequency of collaborative planning meetings beyond those required
  - Teacher involvement in professional learning activities
  - Teacher use of strategies gained through participation in professional learning activities



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# We experienced these changes as a result:

- Improved BST focus
- Improved school climate (more collegial)
- Increased focus on learning
- Implemented distributed leadership practices to promote teacher leadership and empowerment
- Implemented a data-driven and research-based planning focus to achieve a higher quality of instructional practices



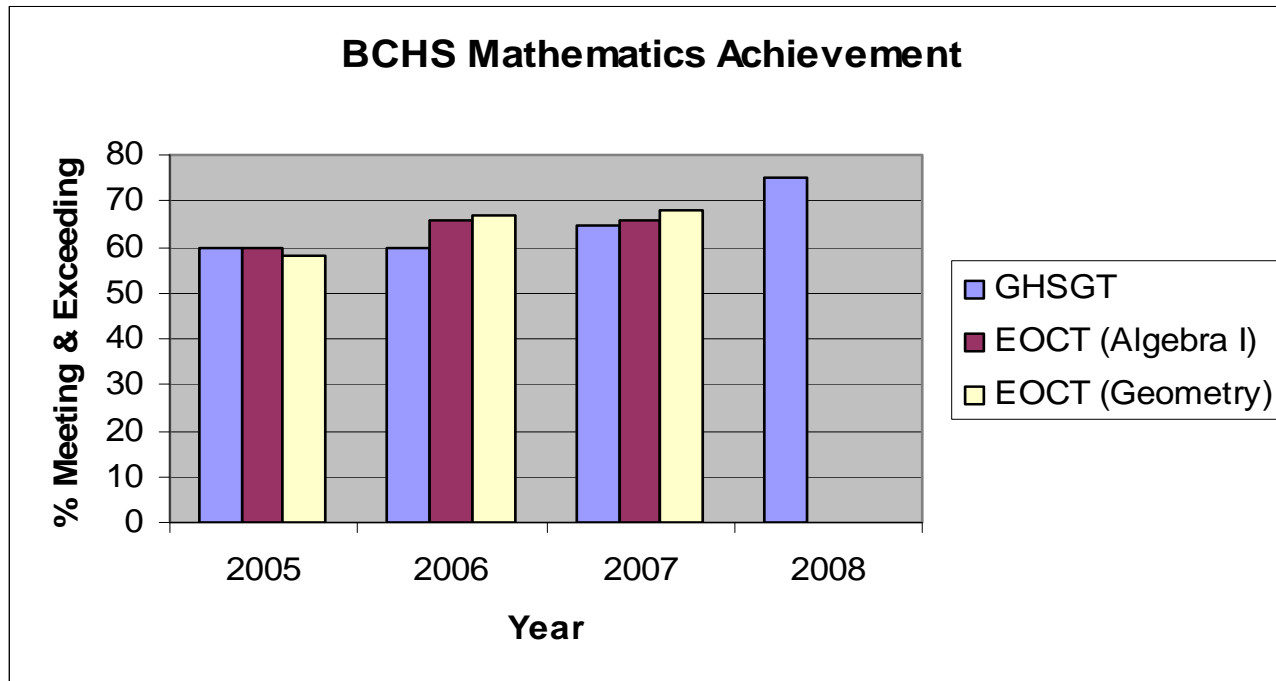
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# We gained these targeted measurable results:



	2005	2006	2007	2008
<b>GHSGT Math</b>	<b>59.7%</b>	<b>59.7%</b>	<b>64.8%</b>	<b>74.9%*</b>
<b>EOCT (Algebra I)</b>	<b>60.0 %</b>	<b>66.0%</b>	<b>66.0%</b>	<b>Pending</b>
<b>EOCT (Geometry)</b>	<b>58.0%</b>	<b>67.0%</b>	<b>68.0%</b>	<b>Pending</b>

GHSGT % scores are based on meeting/exceeding the enhanced criteria for AYP  
 EOCT scores are based on the DOE reports sent to Burke County  
 \* The 2008 GHSGT percentage reflects preliminary scores reported prior to AYP determinations.



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# We also gained these unanticipated measurable results...

- Experienced low teacher turnover in the math department:
  - One teacher at the end of 2007
  - Zero teachers at the end of 2008
- Experienced an increase in the frequency (and quality) of collaborative planning meetings among math teachers
- Experienced an increase in Pass + scores on the GHSGT among targeted students
- Experienced an increase in passing scores (516 or higher) on the GHSGT among students not enrolled in upper-level math classes



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# These other factors influenced our results:

- Implemented a series of department-wide math strategies which include GHSGT daily review, common assessments, and LFS math strategies
- Increased the instructional time in math from 60 to 90 minutes daily through the composite schedule



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# We learned these lessons:

- **Teacher empowerment through distributed leadership** is critical to initiate and sustain school improvement efforts.
- **Data analysis leads to the development of a clear focus** and shared vision for improving student learning.
- **Expectations and outcomes must be monitored** by teachers and administrators.

# What this meant to us as professionals:

- **Distributed leadership and teacher empowerment is self-sustaining** —once teachers become comfortable with it, they will tolerate nothing less.
- **Sustained school improvement is possible** only through teacher leaders and as a collaborative effort rather than a top-down directive.



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# Our Solution Implementation Summary:

- **Challenge Identified:** Leadership was not distributed among teachers; therefore there was no clear focus or shared vision and teachers were not truly empowered to collaborate for the purpose of developing, implementing, and sustaining school improvement initiatives.
- **Set of Solutions:** Refocusing of BST mission to facilitate collaboration and appropriate data analysis techniques, leading to higher-quality instruction and enhanced student achievement.
- **Changes Experienced:** Ongoing improvement in mathematics and a growing change in school climate through collaboration and collegiality.
- **Result Realized:** Gains in the percentage of students exceeding standards on the GHSGT and math EOCTs.



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