

Promising Practice

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Sumter County

Cherokee Elementary

A Core Knowledge Academy

Pre- K to 2nd Grades

Principal: 2006 - Present

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Cherokee Elementary -
An Official Core Knowledge
Visitation Site



About our Better-seeking Team:

Better-seeking Team

- The Better-Seeking Team (BST) was comprised of a diverse group of colleagues who reflected high energy for change and/or expertise in mathematics: Principal, Assistant Principals, Media Specialist, Literacy and Mathematics Coaches, Counselor; 2nd Grade Lead Grade Teacher, 1st Grade Lead Teacher, Preschool Lead Teacher, Kindergarten Lead Teacher

Selection Process

- The Better-Seeking Team was selected based on special skills and strengths in the 8 Roles of School Leaders™

Supportive Structures and Processes Implemented for the BST to work as a collaborative team

- The principal set the tone for the group by modeling the importance of working as a team and making team-based decisions that are supported by data
- Implemented the Georgia School Standards
- Implemented Framework for Leadership of School Improvement™

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We faced this challenge:

Background: Cherokee Elementary

- Title 1 School
- Reading Excellence Act Reform 2000/2004
- Reading First School 2004/2009
- 84% Free Reduced Lunch
- Prior to GLISI process implementation did not make AYP (2005/2006)

Data

- 64% of second grade students meet and exceed standards on the Math CRCT
- Lack of Shared Vision and Mission
- Low Student Expectations

SMART Goal

- 72% of second grade students meet/exceed standards in Mathematics by 2008/2009.

Challenge

- Faculty's reluctance to implement a school improvement process
- Prepare and implement a restructuring plan for standards-based learning

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

Causes Identified:

- Weak Mathematics Program – not aligned to the Georgia Performance Standards
- Lack of technology for math practice
- Lack of research-based math strategies
- Insufficient math assessment programs or process
- Insufficient class time dedicated to math instruction
- Lack of Professional Learning in the area of math
- Large amounts of early check-outs during math instruction from parents
- Lack of evidence for data analysis

Processes Used to Identify Actionable Causes (using the Team-based Process):

- Wrote/Shared Value Promises
- Align/Shared mission statement
- Disaggregated district/school data to assess learning
- Analyzed root causes using: Fishbone, Affinity Diagram
- Conducted best Practice Self-Assessment Survey
- Developed Process Flow Charts to increase understanding of procedures

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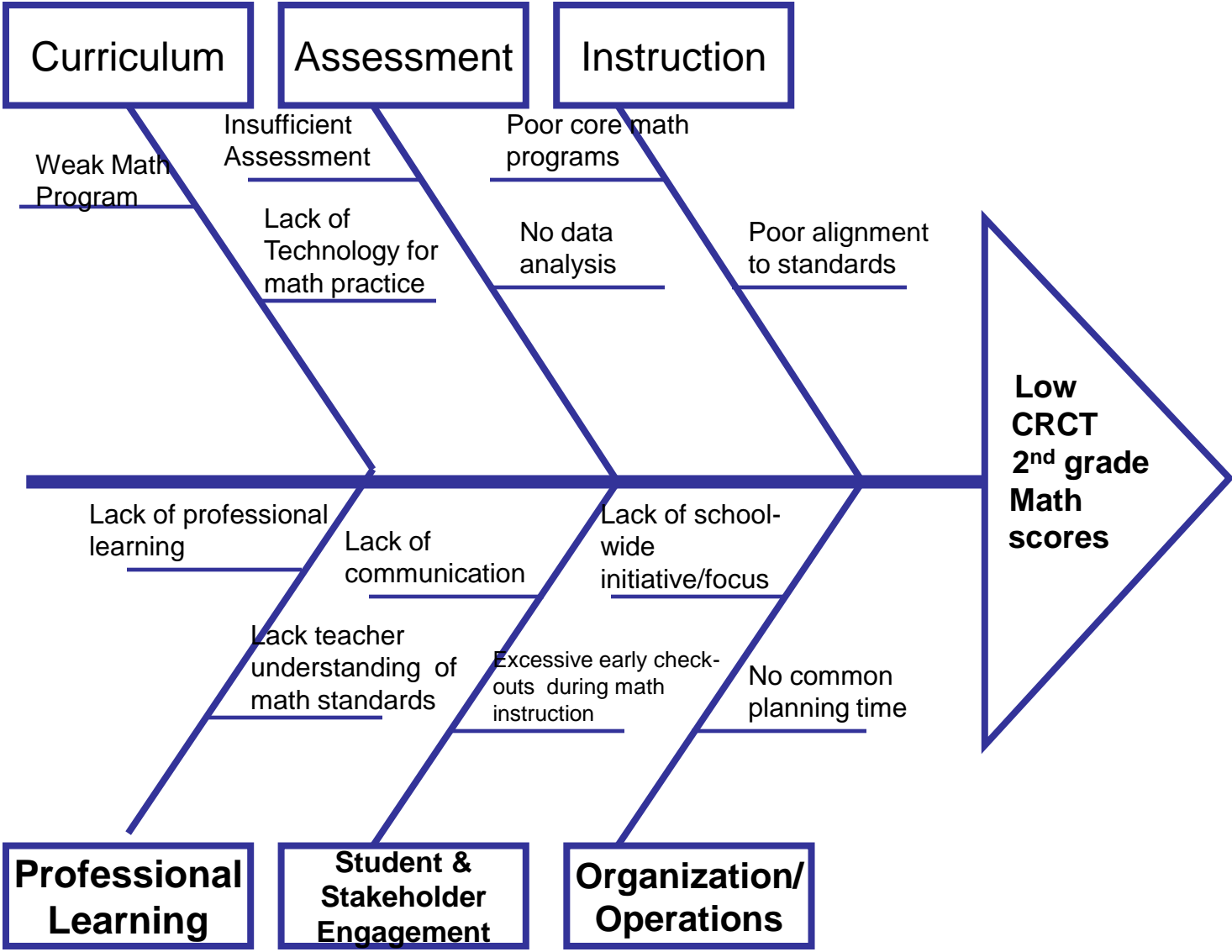
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As part of our root cause analysis...our Fishbone Diagram looked like this:



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

- Using the team-based process – the Better-seeking Team used the School Logic Chain to guide the team process, the Fishbone to identify the causes, and the Affinity Diagram to closely examine and rank the most important causes of our mathematics achievement problem.
- As a result of the problem analysis process, the team began to rank the causes to systems through data. The Affinity Diagram resulted in the team clumping the math causes into three main categories Curriculum/Instruction, Organization, and Assessment.
- The Best Practice Self-Assessment survey confirmed the need to delve deeper into best practices and the achievement indicators. The team took the survey resulting in high agreement in the area of curriculum and instruction. Assessment, technology instruction, and professional learning survey and responses resulted in wide disagreement and caused much discussion about the current practices.
- The BST determined 15 causes aligned to data that could be used as evidence toward creating a process of change for improving math performance.

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

Curriculum

- Implement New Core Math Program
- Implement a mathematics lab with supplemental math software
- Design a master schedule to include 90 minutes of math instruction (uninterrupted) and common planning time
- Implement Core Knowledge Sequenced Curriculum

Assessment

- Implement Benchmark assessments; Progress Monitoring
- Implement Data Meetings

Instruction

- Mirror math best practices from the Reading First process: research-based instructional strategies, flexible grouping, data discussions, student data based decisions, needs-based groups, commentary, and math journal writing.

Professional Learning

- Conduct Leadership Retreat – Develop and implement a culture of professional learning
- Design/implement Faculty Study Groups with focus on math standards and elements
- Utilize Academic Coach – embedded learning with modeling, feedback, and conferencing

Rationale for Solutions:

- Align math achievement problems with strategies and goals
- Base decisions on best practices

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We took these actions to implement the set of solutions:

Developed a professional learning community:

- Wrote and shared value promises (whole faculty)
- Wrote a school mission statement collaboratively (whole faculty)
- Utilized common planning time to collaborate on instructional needs
- Developed/aligned curriculum maps
- Implemented Faculty Study Groups on Mathematics standards and elements
- Implemented embedded adult learning through the uses of a math coach
- Provided training to teachers to increase uses of technology in the classroom

Embedded data-driven decision-making:

- Developed a Data Room
- Implemented math Data Meetings
- Based instructional and curricula decisions on student data

Planned Math instruction differently:

- Implemented 90 minutes of uninterrupted math instruction
- Implemented new Core Math Program – aligned to standards
- Implemented the uses of the Georgia Performance Frameworks
- Provided common planning time to increase instructional collaboration

Installed technology:

- Increased the use of instructional technology – installed in classrooms additional computers, smart boards, airliners, web-based math programs

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We tracked our impact and results...



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- Focus walks, eWalks, informal and peer observations were used by academic coaches, administrators, and teachers on implementation of Core Math Program
- Agendas/minutes were used to drive Data and Student Performance Team Meetings
- Master Schedule was monitored to ensure uninterrupted math instruction
- Benchmark assessments and progress monitoring results were topics of data meetings and student performance team meetings
- Data were downloaded/analyzed from mathematics software to ensure student progress and goal achievement
- Adjustments to math instruction were made/aligned to lowest performing element or standard based on student data
- Monthly Faculty Study Groups were scheduled with the RESA consultant to observe fidelity to the standards/elements, core math program and curriculum map
- Parents were informed of the initiative during first parent meeting of the school year
- Student Expectations were consistently sent to parents every nine weeks

We experienced these changes as a result:

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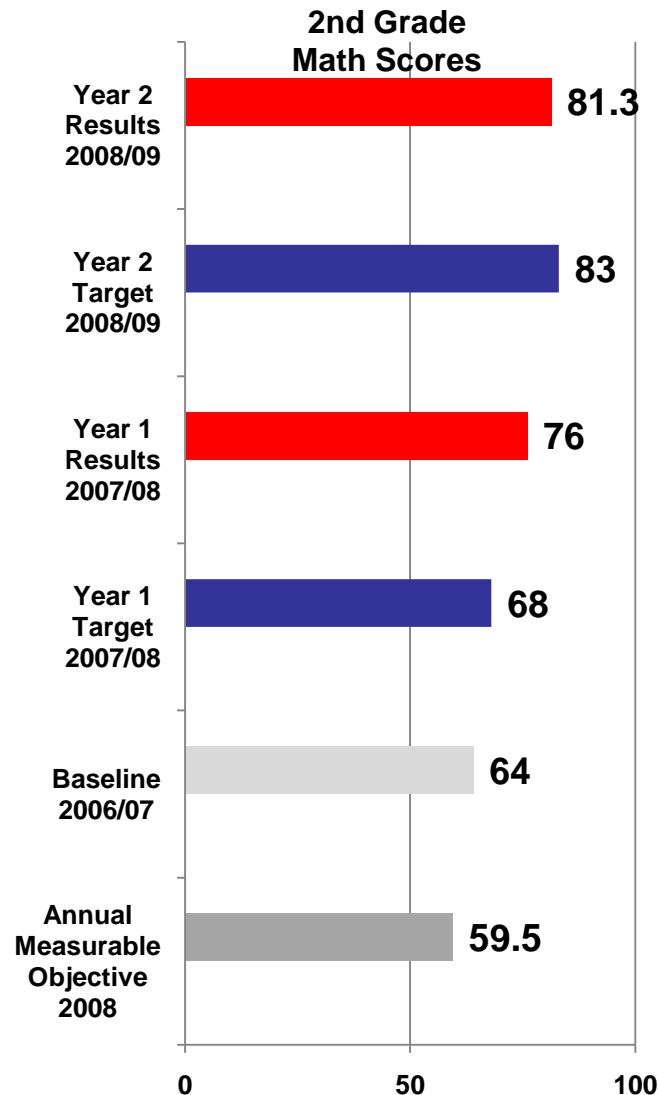
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- Focused school-wide mission for school improvement
- Developed a school culture of “LEARNING” – community learning groups
- Changed mathematics program to address better alignment to the Georgia Performance Standards and Elements
- Increased quality of instruction by understanding the Georgia Frameworks, Standards-based teaching via RESA through study groups
- Maximized and protected instructional time
- Engaged excitement for math by increased uses of interactive technology-based math activities.
- Increased professional dialogue on student learning and data
- Increased student work with commentary as a major vessel for feedback
- Implemented a Data Room resulting in data-driven instruction becoming the norm
- Increased parents interested in standards/elements/tests performance

We gained these targeted measurable results:

How long have you been with GLISI?	3 years (2007) Cohort 17
Indicator	CRCT Math 2 nd graders
Baseline (2006/07)	63% CRCT Math (Meet/Exceed)
Year 1 Target (2007/08)	68% CRCT Math (Meet/Exceed)
Year 1 Results (2007/08)	76% CRCT Math (Meet/Exceed)
Year 2 Target (2008/09)	83 % CRCT Math (Meet/Exceed)
Year 2 Results (2008/09)	81.3 % CRCT Math Meet/Exceed
Year 3 Target (2009/10)	83 % CRCT Math Meet/Exceed
Year 3 Results (2009/10)	



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We also gained these unanticipated measurable results...

- More focused vision modeled by the leadership team (value promises shared with parents and team members)
- Assessment for learning – quality descriptive feedback using student work with commentary (samples of student work, rubrics)
- Assessment of learning – Benchmark assessments (TestGate, mClass), progress monitoring (mClass)
- Teacher Teams' evidenced learning through discussions and dialogue of student data and mastery of standards and elements (Student Performance and Data meetings)
- Stronger commitment to standards-based learning and teaching (display boards, standards/elements, commentary, samples of work, team collaboration)
- Increased student motivation and competition for mathematics (Math Bowl, Math Awards)
- Problem of the Week – engaged students' mathematical thinking and fun school wide (Administrators encourage math each Friday)

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These other factors influenced our results:

- Sumter County Schools central office leaders promoted development of vertical and horizontal math alignment teams resulting in common understanding, language, and expectations.
- Parent awareness caused decrease in the number of students being checked out of school early during math instruction.
- Teachers recruited and hired to fill vacancies were selected based understanding and experience with research-based math instructional practices.

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We learned these lessons:



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Lessons Learned:

- The research-based process modeled by Reading 1st was mimicked in the content area of mathematics. The uninterrupted time, technology in the classroom, standards/elements the major focus. Reading Excellence Act introduced Georgia to the embedded learning process using coaches (academic, literacy) . Math has to be given the same attention.
- The teams learned that competition in mathematics caused excitement in learning.
- Student learning increases when they understand what is expected of them.
- Teacher knowledge increases when they understand what is expected.
- Students need more opportunities to self-assess their learning. Use tools such as graphic organizers, rubrics, and samples of quality work for self-assessment.
- Interactive technology engages students in mathematics (smart boards).
- Teacher buy-in is important to the change process.

What this meant to us as professionals:

Meaning to you as a professional:

- The BST and faculty now understands the process of our team work.
- The team shares a commitment to building a culture of success.
- The teams work as a “family.”
- The faculty has embraced standards-based teaching and learning.

Our Solution Implementation Summary:



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- **Challenge Identified:** Resistance of the faculty to change and embrace a new process of teaching and learning that included best practices.
- **Set of solutions:** Using best practices to analyze causes with the fishbone process and ranking the solutions using the affinity diagram caused an awareness that strengthen commitment to change. The team began implementation of the solutions during Leadership Retreat and continued through the school year.
- Professional learning through study groups increased adult learning in the area of math instructional strategies, standards and elements. Focus walks and eWalks were designed to monitor implementation of standards-based curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Routinely protected the 90 minutes of instructional time. Increased technology interaction and engagement within the daily routines and rituals of mathematics. Implemented a common planning time for teachers to collaborate and plan math units/frameworks.
- **Changes Experienced:** Student achievement increased by 8 percentage points the following school term. Cherokee became an official Core Knowledge School and Visitation site 2009.
- **Result Realized:** The quality of Math instruction has improved by evidence of student achievement increasing over the last two years. Math achievement has improved over the last two years by 17.3 percentage points.