

TITLE OF BEST PRACTICE: Principal Walk-Throughs

SCHOOL: Trimble Middle School

DISTRICT: Trimble Local School District

Submitter Name: Sarah M. Luthy

Position of the Submitter: Math Coach, LEA Contact

Submitter Email Address: tl_sluthy@seovec.org

Submitter Phone: (740) 767-2810

Submission Date: May 28, 2013

My Superintendent/Principal is aware of and approved the submission of this "Evidence-Based Best Practice"? ...

- 1. How many students did this Evidence-Based Best Practice impact? 256**
- 2. Which component(s) of the identified intervention model does this Evidence-Based Best Practice align? Check any that closely align.**

- Replaced the principal (all models)
- New evaluation system using student growth as a significant factor (transformation)
- Use locally-adopted competencies to rehire no more than 50% of staff (turnaround)
- Identify and reward staff increasing student outcomes (all models)
- Strategies to recruit, place, retain staff (all models)
- Select and implement instructional model based on student needs (all models)
- Job-embedded professional development (all models)
- Continuous use of data (all models)
- Increased learning time (all models)
- Social-emotional and community-oriented services and supports for students (all models)
- On-going mechanism for community and family engagement (transformation)
- Operating flexibility (transformation)
- New governance structure (turnaround)

3. Describe the situation before the Evidence-Based Best Practice was implemented. Explain why the improvement was needed. Provide summary of data to illustrate the need.

Before we implemented principal walk-throughs at the middle school, we did not frequently and consistently monitor the execution of school or district selected best practices. We would adopt a strategy and provide professional development (PD); however, we just assumed that the strategy was being implemented across the board and with fidelity. We realized that making these assumptions was not benefiting our students or staff. With principal walk-throughs, we are now able to observe the frequency a strategy is being implemented and even the quality of implementation allowing us to make data-based decisions about whether further PD is needed or whether our focus should be turned somewhere else.

4. Describe the process of implementing the Evidence-Based Best Practice, including a basic timeline of events leading to full implementation, any troubleshooting or course corrections you made, and the evaluation of the Evidence-Based Best Practice.

Although this is the first time the middle school has had principal walk-throughs, the staff was already familiar with the process. The school's literacy coach occasionally performed walk-throughs as part of our Marzano training a couple of years prior to our involvement with the School Improvement Grant (SIG). With some familiarity of the process, the principal did not have to address issues of concern with the purpose behind walk-throughs.

During the 2011-2012 school year, we began implementing the principal walk-throughs. The principal solely looked at the implementation of posting/stating of learning targets and identifying the co-teaching model being utilized. These walk-throughs did not occur every day and did not provide individual teacher feedback. Data was presented at staff meetings on a monthly or bimonthly basis.

As we continued our work with SIG and received additional PD, we decided that our walk-through protocols needed some improvements. During the 2012-2013 school year, we refined our process in order to have a larger impact on teacher performance, which directly impacts student achievement. The principal decided to start with a basic form with only a couple of look-fors and quarterly add in additional items. At the start of the school year, we began with the same look-fors as the previous year: learning targets and co-teaching. As the year progressed, the principal added in student engagement, instructional strategies, and the quality of the learning targets. The new protocols also established a walk-through form that provided individual teacher feedback.

With unforeseen circumstances that occurred, we did not implement walk-throughs with fidelity for the first half of the school year. They were sporadically accomplished and often completed by the instructional coaches and coordinators rather than the principal. This prevented us from having sufficient data to analyze during Building Leadership Team (BLT) meetings to make instructional decisions. However, at the start of the second semester, the district decided to hire an interim principal. With the interim principal, the number of walk-

throughs increased and they were occurring on an almost daily basis. It was at this point, that we began presenting the data at BLT meetings discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the school, which allowed us to make decisions about staff needs and professional development.

5. Share the data indicating that this Evidence-Based Best Practice has increased achievement, increased attendance, reduced discipline incidents, or increased graduation rate.

As discussed earlier, we had a difficult beginning to the implementation of principal walk-throughs this school year. We believe this impacted how the walk-throughs were able to positively affect our student achievement.

As the data was analyzed, comparing those students who took the Ohio Achievement Assessments (OAAs) in 2011 and 2012 (alternative assessments not included) we were unable to find trends across the middle school. We did have four areas that experienced an increase in the percentage of students passing, three areas that had a decrease, and one that remained stable. The students that experienced the greatest increase in achievement are our current seventh grade students. From the 2011 OAA to the 2012 OAA, they had an increase of 11% in students passing the reading portion with their average score increasing by 7.27 points, and they had an increase of 7% passing the math portion and the average score increased by 11.33 points.

We hope to see a greater and more consistent impact on student achievement when OAA scores are released for the 2013 assessments. It is important to note that there are many factors that influence student performance. However, we can show a greater influence on teacher performance with our data. For instance, after we began looking at the quality of learning targets, we began to see an increase in the writing and posting of high quality learning targets. Initially we had teachers writing solely a concept or posting an indicator strip. Then, we observed a shift to writing targets that included a power verb and the concept. Also, from the start of the school year to the end we observed an increase in co-teaching partners using co-teaching models other than one-teach, one-assist (which is the least effective of the five models). With the increased use of best practices by teachers, this will certainly influence student achievement for the good.

6. Briefly explain how this Evidence-Based Best Practice will be sustained once SIG funding is no longer available.

Walk-throughs will continue after SIG funding expires. Fortunately, this strategy is inexpensive to implement in terms of supplies. To be able to implement this strategy, the area that must be addressed is time and priority management by the principal. Principals can easily be pulled in multiple directions and have to handle unexpected incidences with students causing them not have the time to conduct rounds. Additionally, with the Ohio Teacher Evaluation System, walk-throughs are expected to increase in frequency and become a more fluid part of our school culture.

7. **Briefly share any lessons learned and/or advice to other schools wishing to implement this Evidence-Based Best Practice.**

We have learned a few lessons from implementing principal walk-throughs over the last two years. They are:

1. **Start Small:** Begin with only a couple of look-fors. This allows teachers to master those areas. They can focus on refining their skills in one or two areas like learning targets instead of feeling overwhelmed by the amount of feedback provided to them. Then, as areas are mastered by the staff, include other look-fors to master. However, do not remove items from the look-fors, because it ensures there is continued accountability for all valued strategies.
2. **Provide Feedback:** Without individual teacher feedback, there is little accountability and you will be less likely to see change in teacher practices. It is easy for people to hide behind the school's performance. However, if they are continually seeing that they are not implementing a strategy, you are more likely going to observe transformations in individual teacher practices.
3. **BLT Data Discussions:** Present the school data not only at staff meetings, but at BLT meetings. At these BLT meetings, the school leaders are able to delve into the nitty-gritty of the data and begin making well informed decisions. For instance, we noticed that we had high level implementation of posting learning targets and our discussion turned to whether or not the quality of those learning targets were where they needed to be. This meeting resulted in adding to the look-fors and providing additional professional development in the area of learning targets. Simply put: Use the data or you are just wasting your time!