DOINGWHATWORKS

Norview High School

6501 Chesapeake Boulevard
Norfolk, Virginia 23513
Principal: Marjorie Stealey

Located in Norfolk, Virginia, Norview High School's diverse student population experiences high mobility because of the local military presence. Among Norfolk Public Schools, Norview is a model for data use. Norview began to focus on data in response to the implementation of the Virginia Standards of Learning (SOL) end-of-course assessments in 1998.

- High (9–12)
- 59% Black
- 30% White
- 3% Asian
- 3% Hispanic
- 42% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch

Cycle of Instructional Improvement

To monitor instruction, content-area teachers developed a database of test items for each of the 11 core subjects. Test items align with state instructional and testing requirements and are used to develop assessments throughout the year. As part of the cycle of instructional improvement, teams use data from test results to regularly update and revise items in the database. Content-area teams classify items by degree of difficulty and level of discrimination (or students' ability to choose a correct answer from a field of choices). These two indicators are combined to identify items to rewrite and retest or eliminate from or keep in the database. For example, a team keeps moderately difficult, highly discriminating test items in the database but eliminates high-difficulty, nondiscriminating test items.

Units are structured around the state instructional blueprint. To determine how many tests and quizzes are needed to monitor progress during a unit, the team uses data from common assessments and the SOL from the previous year. The team leader draws from the test item bank to design the end-of-unit test. Although teachers do not know what particular items will be on the test, their collaboration to write the items guarantees familiarity with the available range of questions.

At the end of each unit, the team examines students' results overall, by classroom, and by subgroup. Team leaders record information, such as grade distribution, percentage of students scoring advanced or proficient, and pass rate. The team also looks at the three test items with the highest and lowest percentages of correct answers by classroom. This helps to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of teaching for the unit.

Content-area teams also use the database to plan and reflect on instruction. Teams begin planning instructional units during the summer and meet regularly throughout the year to refine plans. The types of data analysis performed include item analyses comparing last year's and the current year's results to reveal instructional strengths and weaknesses, multiyear reviews of unit assessments to track changes in student achievement and identify potential instructional changes for the topic, and examinations to compare new teachers with the rest of the team.

During the 2007–08 school year, special education teachers and general education teachers taught the same content, but special education students did not earn the desired test scores on a unit. By examining each test item, the team noted that special education students scored low on specific types of items. After exploring the instructional practices regarding these items, the team realized that special education instruction of this unit had not included hands-on activities to the same extent as the general education classes. The general education teachers then provided special education teachers with support in emphasizing similar hands-on instructional activities. As a result, special education students in ninth grade outperformed regular education students on two of the four content areas in the SOL assessment the following year.

Data-Driven Culture

A cycle of instructional improvement supports Norview's data-driven culture. "It [the cycle] begins when we select teachers," the principal noted. "Teachers at our school really have to think about their practice as something that is constantly developing. They have to hold themselves accountable, but they also have to hold students accountable. If something doesn't work in the classroom, the first thing a teacher in this building does is ask, 'What haven't I done?'" Content-area teams work with team leaders to constantly use data in examining instructional strategies, the delivery of content, and student achievement. As such, a high degree of accountability exists among all staff.

The principal holds teachers accountable by monitoring their grade books: "Looking at data is like looking into the window of a classroom," the principal said. When a teacher's students are not progressing, the principal convenes a one-on-one meeting with the teacher to share data, discuss areas of strength and weakness, and provide guidance for improvement. Similarly, teachers hold each other accountable for using data to guide instructional decision making.

Teachers are also willing to provide support to their colleagues. The principal further indicated that teachers work collaboratively and use common assessments but have latitude to be creative and design lessons individually.

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under contract number ED-PEP-11-C-0068. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.