

DOINGWHATWORKS

 VIDEO
3:53 min

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Increasing Student Engagement for Instructional Change

George S. Middleton High School, Florida
January 2014

Topic **TURNING AROUND CHRONICALLY LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS**

- Highlights**
- » Middleton High School focused on increasing student engagement as part of their turnaround process.
 - » They moved to a block schedule that offered appealing elective classes early in the day to increase attendance.
 - » They implemented more engaging instructional approaches, including differentiation, to engage students in classes.
 - » They support this focus through lesson studies, which allow teachers and administrators to offer feedback about instruction and engagement in classes, and conducting direct conversations with students about what they are learning.

About the Site **George S. Middleton High School** **Tampa, Florida**

Demographics

(Source: Public Schools K12, 2009-10)

- » Grades 9–12
- » 74% Black
- » 14% Hispanic
- » 11% White

- » 1% Asian
- » 76% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch
- » 6% English Language Learners
- » 22% Special Education
- » Schoolwide Title I


Middleton High School is a large, comprehensive high school located in Tampa, Florida. It began its turnaround in 2010 after being placed in Intervene status by the state. The state and district, Hillsborough County Schools, engaged in a coordinated turnaround approach that included:


- » conducting initial assessments of student achievement, instructional practices, and personnel development along with Middleton school staff;
- » supporting changes to address the school's climate and culture, particularly its negative reputation in the community; and
- » implementing scheduling and instructional changes to increase student involvement and engagement.

Though the state and district continue to support the school, Middleton is now considered a successful turnaround case.


Full Transcript





 00:03 My name is Owen Young, Principal of Middleton High School located in Tampa, Florida.

 00:08 When I arrived at Middleton High School, it was clear that the avenue for creating a culture, or the avenue of a culture that promoted student academic achievement, was absent. We did not look at attendance in isolation. We looked at the attendance issue more from a strategic standpoint, trying to identify what could we do to make school more meaningful. Due to the level of students needing remedial services on a yearly basis—we receive kids maybe 60% to 70% in our freshman class who require some level of remediation—


that's stripping away the opportunity to participate in an elective or something that they like.

 **00:50** So we've decided to look at several electives. One was construction; one was barbering to give, especially our young men, an opportunity to engage in an elective that we thought they would like. We did a survey, we captured their information, and then we went to work, working with the superintendent and the district staff to put in place an elective, the barbering class, that allowed students who wanted to develop the barbering skill set to really participate in this career pathway for themselves. We strategically put the barbering class at the first-period block because we knew that if they were coming to school and if they were coming to school for something they like, we could then sustain them throughout the school day.

 **01:34** In addition to that, we're looking for the teacher to identify differentiated instructional strategies that, again, all level learners, despite where they are in a classroom, have the opportunity to engage in some level of rigorous activity that's going to really stretch them and get out of them. We support these things through our lesson study, where our teachers have the opportunity to go in with us and look at a lesson. We're really looking at the student engagement aspect of it. And we're then able to come back, have discussions with each other to see where we could improve and how we could critique and fine-tune an instructional lesson that is always going to reflect a level of student engagement, the rigor and the relevance, and ending that lesson with a scaffolding and a conclusion of students being able to demonstrate that they have mastered the content during that instructional period.

 **02:30** During student engagement and during observations of student performance and participation in class, the major strategy that we use is to actually talk with students. During our observations, we are more focused on what the student is doing during the instructional lesson. So we take a very direct approach to the student to really get the depth of what they are doing and to ask the question, "What are you doing and why are you doing it?" So

we're always probing the student to be able to share with us what's happening in the classroom.

 **03:04** There are several remarkable outcomes that I can share as a result of the student engagement in the classroom. Overnight, we saw students who once were uninterested in school now coming to school. The benchmark for me is that students were now buying into the idea of school being a place where teaching and learning was the focus and not behavioral issues. So when you look at those two, as behavior decreased, usually the measurement is that instruction and student academic increased, and that is exactly what we saw as our students committed to the process here at Middleton High School.

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