

# DOINGWHATWORKS

 VIDEO  
4:18 min

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## A Team-Based Approach for Instructional Decision Making

Sanders Elementary School, Mississippi  
January 2014

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

- Highlights**
- » The School Transformation Team includes representatives of different grade levels and content areas as well as the superintendent and state implementation specialist.
  - » The diversity of opinions and perspectives expressed in the School Transformation Team meetings enabled sufficient data and expertise to make sound decisions about new programs, use of student data, and student services.
  - » The principal relied on her ongoing consultation with experts assigned by the state and the expertise of the School Transformation Team to make decisions about instruction.

### About the Site **Sanders Elementary School Hollandale, Mississippi**

#### Demographics


*(Source: Mississippi Department of Education, 2013-14)*


- » Grades PreK–6
- » 99% Black
- » 1% White
- » 99% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch
- » Town–Remote


- » The superintendent is a member of the School Transformation Team and actively involved in decision making at the school.
- » The new school principal was assigned a mentor, content-area consultants, and an implementation specialist who guided her through the turnaround process.
- » Teachers at Sanders Elementary School collaborate on assessment and instruction within and across grade levels through the School Transformation Team, professional learning communities, and grade-level teams.
- » The principal identified teacher leaders for additional professional development. After their training is complete, they will replace the outside consultants in providing coaching to staff.
- » The School Improvement Grant enables a shift towards using educational technology in all classrooms.
- » State coaches and outside consultants provided customized training to the principal and school staff about assessment, use of student data for instructional decision making, and instructional practices.
- » The school operates an extended learning day and summer school to provide additional time for learning.


## Full Transcript





 **00:04** My name is Sarah Bailey. I am principal of T.R. Sanders Elementary here in Hollandale, Mississippi.


 **00:11** Before I was principal—before I became principal, quite honestly, T.R. Sanders was a failing school. There were high teacher absences. I think we had about over 500 absences the previous year and over 1,100 referrals the previous year as well, and collaboration was at a minimum as well as accountability for student performance. So those challenges directly impacted student achievement here at T.R. Sanders, and that’s what we’ve worked to improve over the past four-and-a-half years.

 **00:47** I was given a coach, a leadership coach as well as a data coach to make sure that I understood expectations at the elementary level and that I understood how to analyze data. I was a secondary-trained teacher, so I transitioned to the elementary level. Although I had leadership training, I did not have any training in the areas of literacy at the elementary levels. So those trainings were provided for me through the State Department of Education...Mississippi State Department of Education.


 **01:17** The vision was set forth by the district with respect to what needed to be done at our school, and training subsequently followed and support from the district staff. Our superintendent has always been hands-on with data as well as the path that we're going down, and he's been transparent throughout the whole process. And that has trickled down to our school, and I operate the same way as leader of T.R. Sanders Elementary.


 **01:48 James Johnson-Waldington** [to group]: What we're having to deal with in the upcoming school term is a mandate from the legislature dealing with third grade reading gate. What that means is that...what we have is that our third grade students are going to have to read on the proficiency level before they would be allowed to move to the fourth grade.

 **02:10 Sarah Bailey** [to group]: We need to find a research-based intervention for our children here at T.R. Sanders Elementary to ensure that all students, regardless of how they enter or what level they are when they enter—in pre-K or kindergarten—that we are able to get them up to grade-level expectations with respect to literacy by the end of the third grade.

**Sarah Bailey**  **02:36** Our school leadership team is comprised of teachers, district-level administration, and school-level administration. So our superintendent is a member of our School Transformation Team, our school leadership team. We have a large number of people who are

on our team, and they bring a wide array of perspectives to education and they make sure that we provide input and that...they are also gatekeepers for other teachers at the school who need to know and who want to provide input as to how we're moving our school.

 **03:13 Sarah Bailey** [to group]: We have two proposals that we have been given, and we're going to refer to them as Proposal 1 and Proposal 2. We did ask for a digital demo for each of the programs and both of them have online demos that we can view today. And we must score each proposal using our rubrics, and each of the five areas that I read to you are listed on here with the possible points available.

**Sarah Bailey**  **03:49** This team-based approach is something that came about as we were beginning this path, beginning this journey four years ago. And our School Improvement Grant and this team has provided more structure and has ensured that we have followed all of the guidelines, and thus, you can see the growth and improvement that we've seen.

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