

 VIDEO
3:59 min

[Full Details and Transcript](#)



Transforming Elementary Math Instruction

Sanders Elementary School, Mississippi
January 2014

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

Highlights

- » The turnaround process involved aligning instruction with the state standards and engaging teachers in collaborative discussions about teaching.
- » Math teachers changed their instructional practices and relied more heavily on educational technology such as Smart Boards and hands-on, inquiry-based activities.
- » Math teachers continually revisited their instructional practices based on feedback from the principal and coaches.

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



 **00:05** I am Susan Theunissen. I teach fifth and sixth grade math here at Sanders Elementary School in Hollandale, Mississippi.


 **00:13** My name is Cortez Johnson. I am a fourth grade math teacher at Sanders Elementary.

 **00:19 Child:** 253, 254, 255, 256...

 **Teacher:** Good job, Devlin. Now, our first number is?


 **Children:** Seven hundred... (rest of number inaudible)


 **Teacher:** Seven hundred... (rest of number inaudible)


Cortez Johnson  **00:30** Four years ago we just strictly taught from the textbook. Well, now student engagement is much higher. And it's much higher because, in everybody's classroom with the SIG Grant, or School Improvement Grant that we've had, it allowed all of the classrooms to incorporate technology.


 **00:47 Teacher:** What do we do with those?


 **Children:** Add.


 **Teacher:** Add them up.


Cortez Johnson  **00:50** So we use the interactive white board a whole lot, and we use technology a lot, where they are more hands-on. They are able to, you know, touch and feel, to get up out of their seats, instead of just sitting down at their desk all the time, just with pencil and paper writing.


Susan Theunissen  **01:06** And they're also...where the students are more facilitating the lesson. The kids are doing more of the talking than the teacher talks. You put them in small groups and you still give them math work, but it's not solving just a problem. It's more involved than that, and they get to actually participate in it. A lot like the hands-on activities in the science class, there's hands-on activities in our math classes also. And the kids can see what they're doing and actually do it, and it's much better for them.


Cortez Johnson  **01:38** Those teachers that we're responsible for, most times they're first-year teachers or beginning teachers. We go in those classrooms just to add support to those teachers.


Susan Theunissen  **01:50** And our feedback's not always formal. Sometimes it's informal. You know, walking down the sidewalk, that helps our teaching a lot. Even if it's, you know, someone else that saw my students walking in a good line and they just make a comment, that helps our growth, because the students see this gets me a good, positive comment.

Cortez Johnson  **02:09** We collaborate a lot—I think that’s really helpful with teacher morale, because when you’re a new teacher, sometimes you might be a little hesitant to talk to people that you don’t know, but because we collaborate so much it makes it a whole lot easier, especially for those first-year teachers.

Susan Theunissen  **02:24** We’re a very open school here. In the mornings, it’s “good morning.” We speak to everyone. When we leave in the afternoons, people check to make sure there is no one left in the hallways. We are very open to one another. When Mr. Johnson gives me a suggestion, “Ms. Theunissen, you could try this,” I don’t take it that he is putting down my teaching. I take it that he is giving me an idea of something that I can use to help my teaching and help my students.

Cortez Johnson  **02:53** When we have our PLC meetings, Professional Learning Communities, we make a conscious effort to bring to the meetings what you’re teaching in each lesson. We collaborate with each other on what we’re teaching and during our planning, we make a conscious effort to teach across curriculums so we won’t just be teaching in isolation. We can relate things that they’ve learned in their previous science class or social studies or language arts class into the math class and vice versa.

Susan Theunissen  **03:21** During our summer school program, there are times in their afternoon when the teachers, the summer school teachers, stay for professional development. That teachers at Sanders Elementary have done professional development with our summer school teachers in math and reading and language.

Cortez Johnson  **03:39** We want to show growth with every student, even if it’s not the growth that we are looking for or that should be for that particular grade level. They are showing growth, so we do know that what we’re doing is working.

Developed 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.

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